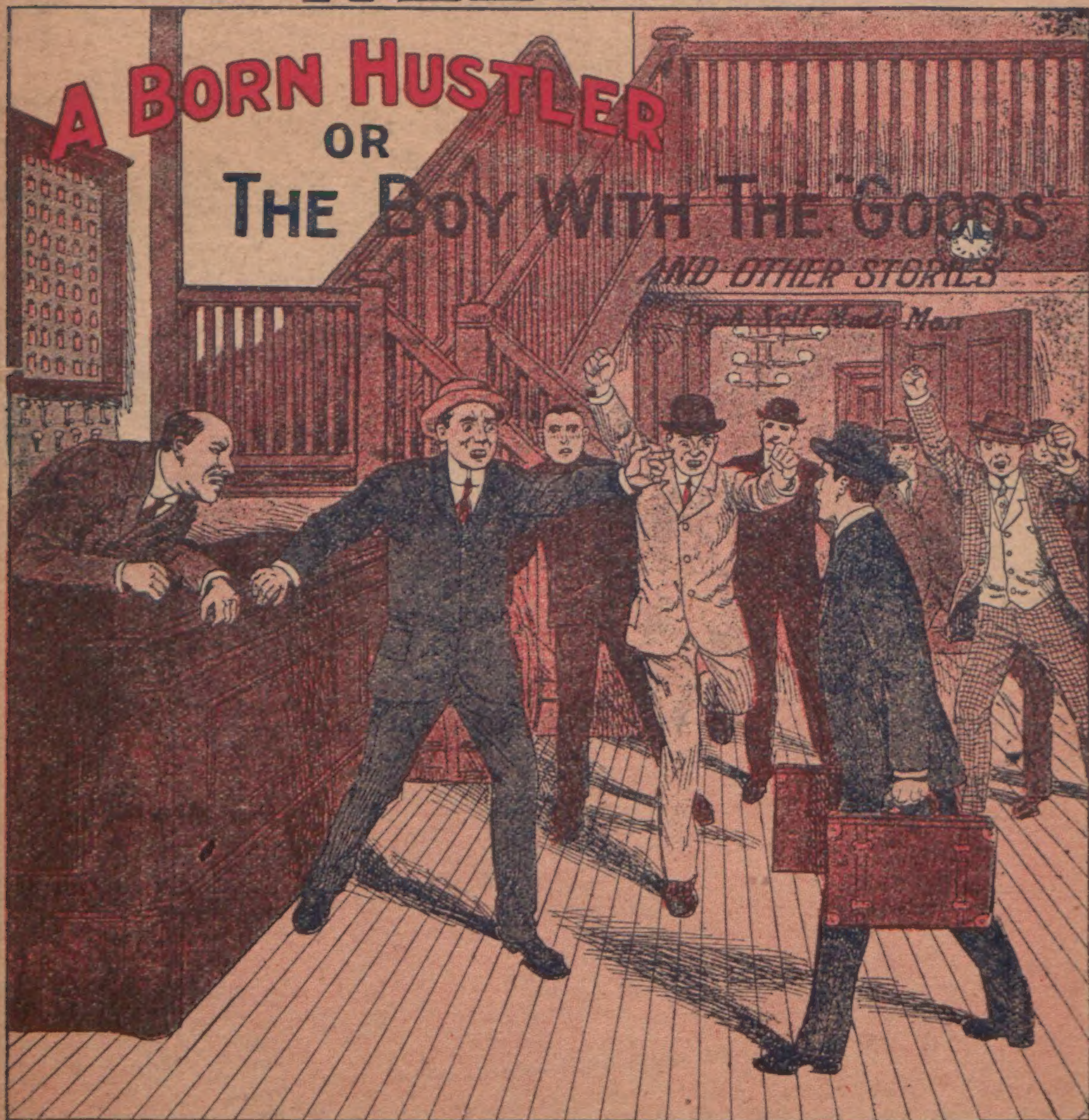


FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS WEEKLY. WHO MAKE MONEY.



As Joe approached the desk with his baggage he found himself confronted by a hostile crowd, the head and front of which was Nick Darcy, his rival. "You're a swindler!" cried Darcy, pointing his finger at him. The bunch hooted.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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A BORN HUSTLER

OR, THE BOY WITH THE "GOODS"

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Which Introduces Our Hero and Shows How He Made An Enemy.

"Get out of my way!"

The words, rudely spoken, by a smartly dressed young man, were leveled at a good-looking boy of eighteen, also well attired. The two had met nearly in the center of a single plank which spanned an excavation in the street.

"Did you speak to me?" asked the boy, whose name was Joe Duncan, looking the young man squarely in the face.

"Yes, I spoke to you," replied the first speaker roughly. "Who do you suppose I spoke to, you lobster?"

"I thought maybe you were talking to yourself," said Joe, quite coolly.

"Oh, you did?" sneered the other. "Go back to the end of the plank so I can proceed."

"Why don't you go back yourself? I stepped on this plank first, and have the right of way."

"Me go back? I guess not. You go back and get a wiggle on. I can't stand here all day. I'm in a hurry."

"If you had made your request politely I might have given way to you, though I consider I have the better right to the plank than you; but since you have chosen to bullyrag me, I decline to make any concessions in your favor."

"You do, eh?" flashed the young man hotly.

"I do," answered Duncan firmly.

"Are you looking for trouble?"

"No, but I'm prepared to meet it if it comes my way."

"Do you think you can work off any bluff like that on me?"

"I am making no bluff."

"Oh, you're not? Well, I'll call your bluff and see what it amounts to. If you don't go back I'll shove you off into the hole."

"You are at liberty to try it, but I warn you if I go over you'll go with me, and in a way that'll soil your clothes."

"You threaten me?"

"I have merely pointed out what is likely to happen to you if you lay your hands on me."

With an ejaculation more forcible than polite the young man aimed a sudden blow at Duncan's face. Had it taken effect as he intended the boy would have toppled off the plank. But it didn't. Duncan probably expected some such demonstration on the other's part, and was on his guard. Dodging his head he threw up his right arm and

caught the young man's wrist in a vise-like grip. A swift turn of the arm brought a cry of pain from the other's lips. He staggered, lurched and toppled over into the excavation, where he landed in a pool of mud and water, while Duncan, without a look, passed on his way. On reaching the next street Duncan looked at the lamppost. As he went on he pulled an envelope out of his pocket and consulted the printing in the left-hand corner. Then he took note of the numbers as he proceeded. Suddenly he stopped.

"I must have passed the place, for these numbers are higher. It's back in the other block. I don't often make a mistake like that. I'll have to go back," he said to himself.

So back he went. As he recrossed the plank where the difficulty had occurred he glanced down into the excavation. If he expected to see the young man still there he was disappointed. That individual had crawled out, at the expense of his shoes and trousers, and went on his way in a very ugly frame of mind. One of the reasons why Joe had passed the number he was bound for was because he thought the establishment he was looking for had a store on the street floor, whereas the company was located upstairs on the second floor. The chief reason was that the boy was thinking of something else while he was passing along the block, and did not use his eyes as he should have done.

Anyway, the city was new to him, and he had only got there two hours before. During that time he had gone to a hotel, registered for a room and ate his dinner. Then he started out to find the street and the number where Bryant & Co. had their place of business. He was expected there, for he had answered their advertisement for a hustling traveler in the hardware and tool line, in which he had already had some experience as a store salesman, and had been requested to come on for a personal interview with the head of the house.

Joe found the number this time all right, and the name of the firm on a semi-circular sign at the entrance leading upstairs. He walked upstairs and entered a long store through a glass door lettered "Bryant & Co., Hardware Specialties." Both of the walls were covered with shelving filled with the goods dealt in by the firm. There were many tables up and down the room, some with show cases containing specialties and some with inclined racks loaded with goods. Half a dozen clerks were in evidence, half of them

waiting on customers, and one of them approached Joe.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"I called to see Mr. Bryant," said Duncan.

"He is out at present, but he is likely to return at any moment. Is your business important?"

"Yes. I have an appointment with Mr. Bryant relative to the position of traveler. I answered his advertisement, and he wrote me to call."

"All right. Go in the ante-room alongside of the counting-room in the rear and wait for him. You will find one of our regular travelers in there. He is waiting to see Mr. Bryant. You can talk to him about the business. I dare say he'll be willing to give you some pointers that will help you to understand our way of doing business," said the clerk.

Joe walked back and entered the ante-room. To his surprise he recognized the waiting individual as the young man with whom he had had the trouble on the plank at the corner. He was looking decidedly out of humor, for his shiny boots bore a liberal coating of dried mud, and the bottoms of his trousers looked damp and bedraggled, and he was thinking what he'd like to do to the chap who had been the cause of his discomfort. Joe's entrance was a disagreeable surprise to him, and he looked at the boy with a most unfriendly stare. Duncan sat down without taking any particular notice of him, but the other could not contain himself.

"You blamed lobster, what brought you here?" he said angrily.

"Business," replied the boy cheerfully.

"Business! Well, you won't do any business here if I can stop you."

"A clerk outside told me I should find one of the firm's travelers in here. As you're the only person present, I must assume you are connected in that capacity with the house. If that is so, it is hardly your place to prevent me doing business with the establishment," said Joe.

"You have insulted me, and I've got to get square with you somehow. I never let anybody take a fall out of me and get away with it."

"I'm sorry that is the way you look at the little run-in we had. You were to blame. If you had not struck at me, with the intention of knocking me off that plank, the matter would probably have ended differently."

"Don't you tell me I was to blame, you boob! You had no right to block my passage when you saw me coming."

"But you stepped on the other end of the plank after I was already on it. It seems to me that you ought to have waited till I had passed over."

"I don't want any advice from you. No matter who stepped on the plank first, you should have turned around and gone back when I ordered you to."

"I didn't recognize your right to order me about, and I don't now. We met as strangers, and I had the right of way. Had you adopted a less insulting attitude I am sure the matter would have ended amicably. I never refuse to oblige a gentleman."

"That is as much as to say that you don't consider me a gentleman. I want you to understand

that I am of more importance than you, you whippersnapper."

"That is a point that I do not care to argue. You may be smart in your line of business, but in other respects you appear to have a lot to learn."

"Confound you for an impertinent monkey. I shall hold no further conversation with you."

With that the young man sprang from his chair and walked out of the ante-room. Something white fluttered to the floor as he left the door, and Joe stepped over and picked it up. It was a double sheet of cream laid writing paper, and it threw out a perfume that intimated it was a note from a lady. The writing was in a feminine hand, and ran as follows:

"Mr. Nick Darcey: After the spectacle you made of yourself last night I have no wish to have you continue your visits. I shall expect you to return the money I loaned you within a week from this writing. Should you fail to do so I shall feel it my duty to acquaint Bryant & Co. with your indebtedness to me, and request the firm to ask you to pay up. Don't presume to call at my apartments with an explanation, for I shall not be at home to you. Respectfully yours,
J. S."

Joe grinned and tossed the note back on the floor.

"So his name is Nick Darcey? I'm sorry he's connected with this establishment, for I don't think from what I've seen of him that we shall ever be on friendly terms. He's one of those fellows who have such a fine opinion of themselves that they try to walk roughshod over every one they impose upon. When they run against somebody who won't stand for their high-stepping, they accumulate a standing grouch against that person. I have no use for men of that brand."

At that moment a stout, red-faced man entered the room, followed by Darcey. This was Mr. Bryant. He glanced at Joe and went on to his private room with the traveling man at his heels. In the course of fifteen minutes Darcey came out, spied the note on the floor, and picked it up. When he saw what it was he crammed it hastily into his pocket, cast a look of malicious triumph at the boy that boded no good for Joe, and left the room. Presently a clerk came out and told Duncan to walk into the private office. Mr. Bryant received him with a curt nod.

"You are Joseph Duncan, I believe?" he said.

"Yes, sir," answered Joe. "Here is the letter I received from you."

Bryant took it and tossed it on his desk.

"What experience have you had on the road?" said the merchant.

"None, sir. I told you that when I replied to your advertisement."

"Hum! I remember. I had some idea of breaking you in if you proved to be smart; but since I wrote you I have changed my mind. I find it would not pay us to try the experiment. We want an experienced man. Somebody who would not require any coaching. We have rivals to consider, and these competitors employ the most skilful men they can pick up. A new and untried young man like yourself could not hold your own

with the people you would run against, and so our trade would suffer. Under these conditions I regret to say that it would not be to our interest to employ you," said the head of the house.

"I have the reputation of being a hustler, sir," said Duncan. "I am thoroughly acquainted with the hardware specialty business, and I am sure I could give satisfaction."

Mr. Bryant shook his head.

"I have been in this business thirty years, and I have never saw a new man who could do justice to his employers at the start."

"But a man has got to get a start in order to show what he can do," persisted Joe.

"That is true enough," admitted the merchant, "but the risk is on the firm that tries him out."

"Then you have definitely decided not to hire me?"

"I regret to say such is the fact."

"Then I will not take up any more of your time. I am rather disappointed, for the tenor of your letter encouraged me to look for a different result. However, since you have changed your mind, I will take my leave."

Duncan got up and, saying "good-day," started for the door.

"Ahem! One moment, young man," said Mr. Bryant.

Joe paused and looked at him.

"You have been under some expense in coming to Chester, and as my letter brought you here, I feel that we ought to make good your expenses. If you will give me an idea of what you are out I will give you an order on my cashier for the sum."

"Thank you, sir, but I couldn't think of taking anything from you. I consider the expense has nothing to do with you at all. I had to assume it in order to get this interview. I understood there was no certainty that I would be taken on. So, sir, we will say no more about it."

Joe bowed and walked briskly out.

CHAPTER II.—Joe Saves a Gentleman and Lands a Good Job.

On the way out Duncan encountered Darcey.

"Got it in the neck, did you?" said the traveling man with a sneer.

"What do you mean by that?" said the boy, stopping and looking him in the face.

"Thought Bryant would give you the chance to learn the tricks of the drumming business. You've found out that this house is not a kindergarten for sucklings."

"What do you know about my business with Mr. Bryant?" replied Joe.

"I know all about it. You might have caught on if it hadn't been for me. I put a nail—several of them—in your coffin. I told you I'd get square with you. Well, I have. That's what you get for trying to put it over me. Now get."

"So you did that? Well, I might expect it of a fellow of your caliber."

Darcey grinned malevolently.

"I did the firm a favor by blocking you, for you're only a greenhorn, anyway. You couldn't do any business, and had you gone out you'd

have been called in before you'd been on the road two weeks. You'd better get back to the counter where you belong."

Having handed out this piece of advice, Darcey turned on his heel and walked off down the store. Joe reached the sidewalk and started to find his way back to his hotel. He had gone two blocks when he heard a shout of "Look out!"

Somebody had sung out the warning to a well-dressed gentleman who was crossing the street, for a rapidly driven express wagon had suddenly swung around the corner and was bearing down on him. The wagon was almost on top of him when Joe's attention was attracted. The boy saw the man stop confused right in the path of the vehicle. He seemed certain of being knocked down and run over by the wheels. This doubtless would have been his fate had not Duncan acted on the spur of the moment.

A score of pedestrians came to a startled halt, expecting to witness something akin to a tragedy. Instead of which they saw, much to their relief, the flash of a boy's figure in the street, and a pair of staggering forms, struck a glancing blow by the forward wagon wheel, lurching toward the curb, across which they fell, with the boy underneath. Several eyewitnesses sprang forward and lifted them up. The boy and the man who had been saved fell apart and were placed on their feet. Somebody picked up the hats of the chief actors in the scene and restored them.

"Upon my word, you're quite a hero, young man," said one of the spectators to Joe.

Duncan took no notice of the compliment.

"I hope you're not hurt, sir," he said to the gentleman he had saved.

"No, I think not, thanks to your splendid assistance," returned the gentleman. "My shoulder feels sore where the wheel struck it, otherwise I guess I'm all right. I am under great obligations to you, my young friend. Let us get out of the crowd. My place of business is close by. We will go there."

The crowd melted away as they walked off together.

"What is your name, young man?" asked the gentleman.

"Joe Duncan," replied the boy.

"Mine is Prescott. You showed great presence of mind by acting so quickly. You live in town, I suppose?"

"No, sir. I'm a stranger in the place. Only came here a few hours ago. I live in Piqua."

"Ah, indeed. Are you here on business?"

"I came here after the position of traveling man, but I was disappointed in not landing the job. I expect to return home this evening."

"So you are a commercial traveler? In what line?"

"Hardware specialties."

"Why, that is my business. Maybe I can do something for you. It would give me great pleasure to be of service to you, for you have placed me under considerable obligation to you."

"You needn't feel that you are obliged to make any return for the service I have rendered you. You are welcome to the favor."

"That's all right, but you may have saved my life, and, naturally, I feel grateful to you, and would like to make some return. Since you are

in my line of business, and are looking for employment, it is only right I should see what I can do for you. What firm did you call on?"

"Bryant & Co., up the street."

"Were you recommended to them?"

"I saw their advertisement in the Chester Times, a copy of which I got hold of in Piqua, and I answered it, stating my qualifications and giving reference. I got a reply requesting me to come on here for a personal interview. I arrived this morning about eleven o'clock. From the letter I got from Mr. Bryant I think I would have been employed, but that I unfortunately had some trouble on the street with one of their travelers, and the man, when he found I was seeking a position with his firm, used his influence against me, and so I was turned down."

"What was the trouble you had with this man?"

Joe explained the matter to Mr. Prescott.

"I don't see that you were so much to blame. By attacking you in such a situation the man left himself open to whatever consequences might happen to him. No, I don't think you could be held responsible for taking the action you did. Here we are. This is our store. We have a larger establishment than Bryant & Co., as we occupy the entire building, and carry a much larger line of goods than that firm."

Joe entered the store, which bore the sign of "Prescott, Mason & Co., Hardware, Tools and Machinery." The ground floor was devoted to a general run of hardware, tools, and so forth. An inside flight of stairs led to the second floor, where the counting-room and private office were. From the number of clerks, bookkeepers, stenographers and other help he saw, Joe easily judged that this house was several times as important as Bryant & Co. And he was not wrong. It was the largest house of its kind in Chester, and owned its own factory on the outskirts. Bryant & Co. sold many of the staple articles manufactured by Prescott, Mason & Co., carrying them in their catalogues because they were in demand. Mr. Prescott took Joe into his private room and questioned him as to his experience as a commercial man. The boy had to admit that he had none, though he was considered a first-rate salesman, and his late employer had told him he would make a success if he went on the road for a good firm. The gentleman asked him how he came to be out of work.

"The firm I was with went out of business owing to the death of the proprietor. The widow sold out to another man, and he put in most of his own clerks and salesmen."

Mr. Prescott asked the name of the dealer, and Joe told him.

"He was not one of our customers," said the merchant.

"No. We got most of our goods from a Chicago house," said Joe.

"Well," said Mr. Prescott finally, "if you wait here I will talk to my partner, Mr. Mason, about you, and if he is not opposed to giving you a chance on the road, why, we will send you out; otherwise I will make a place for you in the store with the view of ultimately using you as a traveler."

Mr. Prescott was absent about ten minutes, and

then returned with his partner, to whom he introduced Duncan. Mason questioned him on several points, and said he had no objection to giving the boy a trial, as they happened to have an opening just then that they had been figuring on filling from the store.

"You owe the young man a good turn, Mr. Prescott, and I won't stand in your way of canceling your indebtedness. He strikes me as a person that has the general ability to make good after a fair trial. He has a good presence, is gentlemanly and polite, and seems to be a good talker. We'll send him out over French's route, make due allowance at first for his lack of practical experience, and see how he pans out," said Mason.

So the matter was settled and Joe unexpectedly found he had landed a much better job than if he had caught on with Bryant & Co.

"Are you prepared to take hold right away?" asked Mr. Prescott.

"I'll have to return home first and pack my grips, as well as to bid my mother good-by for the time I'm away," replied Joe.

"Very well. You can report here on Saturday morning about nine. Your trunk of samples will be ready, but it will be necessary to have you thoroughly coached in our goods. You will have the advantage of handling the P., M. & Co. trademark, which has the call among the best houses in the trade in this section of the country. In some cases you should meet with little trouble in taking orders, but in others you will have your work cut out for you, for you will find yourself in competition with Chicago men and others, including a representative of Bryant & Co. This firm sells a number of our specialties and several imitations. Their travelers have been pushing the second on the strength of the first, and it will be your duty, when you come in competition with a Bryant man, to show up the bogus article."

Joe said he would be on hand Saturday ready for business, and with that assurance he was dismissed. He returned to his hotel and looked up the time-table of the route he would have to take back to his home in Piqua. He found that the express, which stopped at ten o'clock, would take him quicker than if he went by the 7:45 local. The hotel being on the European plan he could get his supper either at the restaurant attached to the house or elsewhere. As it was only four o'clock, he decided to put in his time looking the business part of the city over. After spending a couple of hours in this occupation to much advantage, he went back to the hotel and patronized the restaurant. Then he went into the reading-room and secured one of the evening papers. In the course of time he heard a voice near him that sounded familiar.

He looked around and saw Nick Darcey, seated with his back toward him, talking with a smart-looking man who Joe sized up as a drummer. Darcey was telling the stranger about his encounter on the street with Duncan, but his version of the incident differed in many essential features from the real facts. One of the main differences was the statement that he had forced the boy to take water and give him a clear path across the plank. He then told how he had

queered his chances with Bryant & Co., by telling the head of the house a little fairy tale of his own manufacture. The listener laughed as though the matter was a good joke.

"He might catch on with some other house in your line, meet you somewhere on the road, and cut your trade in half," said the other jokingly.

"No fear of that, either way. He has never been out, to begin with, and that is sure to give him a black eye at the start with any other house. Only a small firm would be likely to take him on at a cheap rate until he has learned the ropes. He had a lot of nerve, I think, to try for a job in our place. I don't see why Bryant offered him any encouragement to come on. Unless a man has had experience, what good is he?" said Darcey.

"If he is a born hustler and well acquainted with his line, has a good appearance and a natural gift of gab, a new man ought to make a showing on his first trip. What did you accomplish the first time you went out?"

"Me? I pulled the business right off the reel," said Darcey.

"Then you must be a good one. I take water from nobody in the notions line, but when I first went on the road I am willing to admit that I was pretty raw. It took time for me to get the hang of selling goods to some of the cranks I ran across. You have to drive things into some people's head with a mallet. Lots of them don't know a good thing when they see it, and you've got to make them see it if you hope to do business with them."

"Oh, there's mighty few dealers I can't talk into taking my line. For instance, on my last trip I ran across an old fellow in Johnsbury. His name is Jensen. I struck his store the first thing when I started out. His stock was pretty well run down, and he was waiting for a salesman from a rival house to show up. I opened my sample case and buzzed him for as good as an hour, but I couldn't get an order. At last I ran in a new line of gab that quite took with him, and before he woke up I had him down for one of my biggest orders of the trip. That's the way I nail 'em. I'm the little white-headed boy with my firm, and they wouldn't lose me for a farm."

Clearly Darcey had a high opinion, or pretended to have, of his own abilities as a drummer. His companion merely grinned, but it is probable he thought a lot. As for Joe, he sized Darcey up for a bluff and braggart. He doubted if he stood as high with his firm as he said he did, but his influence at any rate had proved strong enough to hinder Joe from getting the position he had hoped to land.

"Don't you think you were a bit hard on that young fellow doing him out of a job?" said the other traveler.

"No, I don't. He deserved it," said Darcey.

"But you made him take water on the plank, didn't you?"

"I should say I did. He just crawled when he saw the stuff I was made of," said Darcey boastfully.

That was more than Joe could stand. He got up quickly, laid his hand on the young fellow's shoulder, and said in a tense tone:

"Mr. Darcey, you are a liar and a sneak as well."

His tone attracted the attention of every one in the room.

CHAPTER III.—Joe Starts Out on the Road.

Darcey turned and recognized Duncan, and with not a little consternation. For a moment he sat in dazed silence, then he blustered:

"How dare you address me in that way, you——"

Joe smiled contemptuously.

"You are hardly worth wasting words upon," he said, "but for fear you did not understand me correctly I will repeat what I said—you are a liar and a sneak. You told this friend of yours that you made me take water; in fact, crawl to you on that plank when we met for the first time to-day. To prove that you lied I'm going to make you take it back right here or I'll give you as good a whipping as you ever got in your life. I may be arrested for it, but I'll have the satisfaction of showing you up."

Darcey sprang up, livid with rage.

"You'll whip me, you young——"

"Sit down!" cried Joe, shoving him back into his chair. "Now, sir," he went on, looking at the other drummer, who appeared much astonished at the turn of affairs, "I'm the party who met this chap on the plank at the street corner this afternoon. I heard him give you his version of the incident. There was hardly a word of truth in it. Instead of taking water from this bluff, I made him get off the plank into the excavation in quick order——"

"You're a liar!" shouted Darcey, white with fury.

Joe seized his wrist as he had done on the plank and gave it a sharp twist. Darcey uttered a cry of pain and slipped off the chair to his knees.

"Am I a liar?" said Duncan, giving him another twitch.

"No, no; do you want to break my wrist?"

"Did I make you get off that plank or didn't I?" said Joe.

"I fell off."

"You fell off? Then when you told this friend of yours that you made me get off the plank you were lying?"

Darcey glared at him sullenly.

"Tell the truth, or I'll——"

Joe gave his wrist a twist. Darcey gave a cry and then said "Yes."

"Did you make me take water and crawl to you?" said Duncan, squeezing his wrist.

"No," answered Darcey as he tried in vain to release himself.

"The only true thing you told your friend here about me is that you queered me with Mr. Bryant. You certainly did, in an underhand way, which proves you are a sneak. Now that I have shown you up to your friend, I am through with you, but if I ever catch you lying about me again I'll make you walk six ways for Sunday. Take it from me, you're a bag of wind, and you have no more backbone than a jelly fish."

Joe let go of him, pushed his way through the

bunch of persons surrounding them, and walked up to the desk to settle his bill. While he was thus engaged Darcey and his friend left the hotel. How Darcey squared the situation with the other commercial man we cannot say, but his feelings toward Joe were pretty dark. Joe took the express and duly reached home. He told his mother that he had failed to secure the position he went after, but was lucky enough to pick up a better one. He made his preparations for an absence of several weeks, and left Piqua to return to Chester on Friday afternoon. He reached that city at seven in the evening and registered at the same hotel. Next morning at nine he presented himself at the store of Prescott, Mason & Co. and asked for the head of the house.

"He has not reached the store yet," said a clerk.

"Well, I was directed to report here for instructions at nine o'clock."

"See the manager. You'll find him at his desk on the floor above."

So Joe marched upstairs and asked for the manager. That gentleman was pointed out to him. Joe went over and introduced himself.

"Yes, you are the new traveler who has been put on French's route. Sit down," said the manager, pushing a button.

A small boy appeared.

"Take this young man to Mr. Dixon."

Joe followed the boy up to the next floor where Dixon had a desk.

"Are you Joseph Duncan?" asked Dixon.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

"Sit down. I have instructions to coach you in our specialties and give you sundry points concerning the route you are to go on."

The instructions had not been finished by noon, when Joe was summoned to Mr. Prescott's office, where he was closeted with the head of the house for half a hour. When he was released Dixon took him out to lunch, and on their return the coaching was completed. An expressman was called in to carry his sample outfit to the depot, where Joe had it checked to his first stopping place. He had been provided with a mileage book over the C. & D. road. All side trips over other lines he was to pay for himself and charge in his expense account. His arrangement with the house was for a small salary and a certain commission.

The amount of his earnings would, therefore, depend on the volume of business he sent in. If he held up his end he would do very well financially. The best drummers always prefer to work on the commission basis as far as they can arrange to do so. Where a man's earnings depends on his personal exertions he is pretty sure to do the best he can. Joe would have done his best, anyhow, had he been put wholly on wages, for he wanted to make a showing on his first trip to prove that he could do business on the road. Mr. Prescott preferred to make his earnings largely a matter of commission, to give him the necessary encouragement to hustle. Joe left Chester on Sunday morning by a local and reached his first stopping place, a large town named Carden, about noon. He took a bus for the Commercial Hotel, where the average drummer puts up at. It was on the European plan,

with a restaurant attached. After dinner he strolled out to familiarize himself a bit with the business section where he would have to make calls next day.

Then he took a trolley car and rode out to the suburbs through the residential part of the town. He walked around, taking in the shady streets on the outskirts. He got back to his hotel in time for an early supper. After that he wrote a letter to his mother and read the papers. Next morning he was up and ready for business. His sample trunk was in his room. He opened it and took out a pair of grips which contained the lighter part of his samples. With these he started out to make his first call. Fifteen minutes later he walked into the hardware store of Lowe & Co. He introduced himself to the managing partner, whose name was Smith. As Lowe & Co. carried a full line of P. M. & Co.'s goods, he did not anticipate much trouble in getting an order. The manager had been expecting French, the traveler whose place Joe had taken, to call, and had an order already made out to give him. Joe went over it, made suggestions here and there, and showed samples of new specialties his firm was putting out.

As some of these were improvements, the utility of which the boy demonstrated, they were in most cases added to the order, so that in the end Duncan sold the store quite a bill, on the usual terms. He called Smith's attention to certain samples he had at the hotel which he would like to show him, and which, he said, the store ought to keep in stock. Smith made an appointment with him, and Joe went on to his next place. He did very well up to dinner time. He struck one store, the proprietor of which dealt with a representative of Bryant & Co. Joe told him that he thought his firm would do better by him.

"You are carrying some of our regular stock which you got from Bryant & Co. That firm has to purchase those goods of us, and I guess they are charging you a little more than we do for the same articles," said Joe.

The proprietor, by the name of Brown, who had at first refused to talk business, now looked over the samples and got the prices on them. On some he said Joe's figures were a little lower, while on others they were higher.

"You say Bryant & Co. sells you this article cheaper than what I have quoted?" said Duncan.

"Yes," said the proprietor.

"Will you let me see a sample of the goods they sent you?"

The proprietor got a sample and showed it to him. The two articles were apparently the same, but the one kept in stock at the store did not bear the P. M. & Co. trade-mark. Joe pointed that fact out to the proprietor.

"It's an inferior article that Bryant & Co. are pushing in connection with many other specialties, or they couldn't sell it at the price you say you get it for."

"How do you know it's inferior? They warrant it as the best thing of its kind on the market."

Joe pulled out a memorandum book in which was indicated the difference between the P. M. & Co. brand and the imitation article. He looked up that particular article by its number in his

own catalogue, and then was in a position to talk upon the matter. The proprietor listened to his argument, but seemed incredulous.

"Are you willing to put it to a test?" said Joe.

"What kind of a test?" asked the man.

"The test of a shock. This article you are selling is made of cast iron, while the brand I'm offering you is wrought iron. Your experience must tell you that makes all the difference in the world between the two articles. Your article is liable to break any time, while ours won't break at all."

"I have had no complaint on that score."

At that moment a clerk came in and showed the proprietor an article purchased two days before by a customer which had broken owing to a palpable flaw, now easy to be seen.

"I suppose we will make this good?" said the clerk.

"Yes," said the boss, laying the two pieces of the broken article aside.

Joe, however, asked to see them. The proprietor reluctantly permitted him to examine the broken article. It was one of Bryant & Co.'s cast-iron imitations. Duncan used it as an object lesson, and succeeded in convincing the dealer that he was selling, in many instances, an inferior line of goods, warranted to be first class.

"Of course you know your business, sir, but I should think that you are running some risk with your trade," he said. "Suppose, for instance, this article you have made good should also have a flaw in it and break in a short time, that might cost you a customer. Lowe & Co. and other competitors of yours handle our goods exclusively because their worth has been tested. As the imitation article costs you less, it is possible you are selling it a little lower than the other dealers who handle our line wholly in order to catch custom; but in the end I'm afraid you will find that this method does not pay."

The man said nothing.

"I have put the matter squarely up to you, for your interest as well as ours. I would like to sell you a bill, and I know our terms would suit you as well as the undoubted quality of our goods, but I am not going to talk you to death over the matter. A man of your business sagacity and intelligence is fully competent to decide what he thinks is best for his interests. Whether I sell you anything or not, I will put you next to any point you want to know about the imitation articles. In any case, I have here an assortment of improved goods that we are putting out now that you ought to have in stock if you expect to compete with your business rivals. Lowe & Co. has ordered a full line of them, and I doubt if Bryant & Co.'s traveler will have any samples of them, for we haven't given them out yet."

Joe spoke pleasantly and politely, and his ingratiating manner took with the man, who asked him to call back that afternoon. He wanted time to think the matter over and take a look at his stock.

"All right, sir; I am at your service while I remain in town," said Joe, closing his sample cases.

CHAPTER IV.—Darcey's Little Game.

Joe went on his way. The next store carried a Chicago line of goods, and the boy wasted his eloquence trying to persuade the dealer that the P. M. & Co. brand was the best in the world at any price. The man was perfectly satisfied with the stock he kept in his store, and though he did not refuse to look over the new improvements Joe had to offer, and was favorably impressed by two or three of them, he would not give any order.

He took down the names of the articles that pleased him and said if the Chicago house had nothing to match them he would make that establishment supply him with the P., M. & Co. brand of the articles.

Joe had very fair success that morning, and had landed four orders by dinner time. He captured another before he returned to see Mr. Brown, his only call back. Brown was out, and he waited till he came in. The dealer went over his samples again, and with real interest this time. Joe, in the end, got a good order out of him. He regarded this as quite a feather in his cap, for Brown belonged to the Bryant & Co. man, so to speak, and French, his predecessor, had not been able to get him. He was marked down on Joe's list as extremely doubtful. Joe knew that the capture of a new customer, especially a very doubtful one, would attract the favorable notice of his firm and give him a boost in their opinion.

After getting Brown to sign the order he took his leave. As he was going out at the street door to his surprise he ran against Darcey, with his cases of samples. Darcey gave him a black look, and could not refrain from saying something, for he was greatly surprised to see that the boy he was down on had caught on with some other house, and without the loss of much time. He did not dream that Joe was working for the important house of Prescott, Mason & Co., an establishment he would have given something to get in with himself, for he had some trouble with Bryant & Co.'s imitation goods. Had any one told him that the boy had secured an opening with P., M. & Co. he would have laughed contemptuously, for that house had the reputation of employing only the very best people in their line.

"So you've got out on the road after all?" sneered Darcey. "What one-horse concern has taken you on?"

"I don't work for one-horse people, Mr. Darcey," replied Joe, with some dignity.

"It must be a pretty tart firm that would hire you."

"I don't care to discuss the subject with you. Good-day."

"Hold on! I see you've been hitting Brown here for an order. Did he let you down easy or hard?" grinned Darcey.

"You'd better ask him. You can have what I didn't get out of him."

"Is that so? You found out that he's my man, and that you were only wasting your gab trying to sell him anything. He buys only from Bryant & Co."

"You only think he does. I don't think he'll have any use for your firm after this. He has given a good order for P., M. & Co. goods. He

has got wise to the fact that the imitation specialties furnished by Bryant & Co. are hurting his trade, and after this he's going to deal only in the genuine articles."

Joe walked away, leaving Darcey to rush into the store to learn if there was any truth in Duncan's statement. He not only found there was, and that he had lost Brown as a customer, but he ascertained, to his astonishment, that Duncan was selling for Prescott, Mason & Co., in French's place. He put up a big howl over Brown going back on him, and declared that what had been represented to him as imitation articles were every bit as good as the same things turned out by P., M. & Co. Unfortunately for his argument, Brown had had evidence of the unreliability of the imitation articles that day, and so Darcey had to leave without accomplishing anything.

If he had hated Joe before, he was fiercely set against him now. Brown had been his best customer in Carden, and he set considerable store by him. When Bryant & Co. learned the man had been taken into the P., M. & Co. fold he was bound to hear from the head of his house in a particular caustic way. His feelings were not improved when he found that Joe had done business with another of his customers, which altogether ruined his visit to Carden. By five o'clock Joe had cleaned up the town and was ready to go on to Glenport, his next stopping place. He had only two places in his second town to stop at. Both dealt with his house, and he soon took their orders and transmitted them.

By that time his first letter to P., M. & Co., containing his Carden orders, reached the firm, and the Brown order attracted immediate notice. The order clerk was somewhat surprised that their new man should have caught Brown, and he showed the order to the manager. Later, both Mason and Prescott learned of Joe's success with Brown, and they commented favorably on the promising start the boy had made. A letter of commendation was dispatched to him, which reached him at the town of Goshen, and, naturally, the young hustler felt much encouraged to find himself appreciated. In the meantime, Darcey was following pretty near the same route, but for more than a week they did not meet again. Darcey was aching to get square with him. He had a fertile brain for rascally schemes, and he thought of several crooked tricks to play upon his young rival. He knew that Joe would make a side trip to a small town named Goshen, where there was an establishment that traded with Prescott, Mason & Co.

Darcey had to go there to do business with the other house which bought of Bryant & Co. French had never bothered with Darcey's customer after one failure to land him. Darcey, however, figured that Duncan would try to get the man, and while he did not believe his rival would succeed, for he was hand-in-glove with the dealer, having done him a great favor on one occasion, still, after losing Brown, he did not care to take any chances, and resolved to get to Galena in advance of his competitor. This he succeeded in doing, and after calling on his man and taking his order, he began to lay plans to make trouble for Joe when he arrived. Darcey was on easy terms with a number of sporty chaps in

Galena, and he took half a dozen of them into his confidence.

One of these chaps was the brother-in-law of the editor of the *Galena Evening News*, and he secured the insertion of the following item in the paper:

"AN INGENIOUS SWINDLER.

"Hotelkeepers are cautioned against a well-dressed boy of about eighteen who is traveling about this part of the country representing himself as a commercial drummer. He carries two moderate sized suitcases, and enters hotels with a businesslike air. He registers under various aliases. Sometimes he spends two days and sometimes a week in a hotel, going out each day with his suitcases as though about to make a business round. Then he suddenly disappears without paying his bill, and many small articles belonging to the hotel are missed about the same time. The boy with the suitcases was last seen in Eden, not thirty miles from here, and as he seems to be working this way, hotelkeepers of this town are advised to be on the lookout for him. His arrest would be a public benefit."

Darcey grinned and rubbed his hands when he read it in print. He pointed it out to the clerk of the Bates House where he was stopping.

"I met a drummer friend of mine who ran up against this chap. He described him as a good-looking chap, wearing an up-to-date soft hat and dressed in a blue serge suit. He told me that the young fellow wears a crescent-shaped pin, ornamented with small pearls, in his scarf, and that he represents himself as a traveler for a big hardware specialty house," said Darcey.

"That's your line," said the clerk.

"Yes, and what I don't know about it isn't worth thinking of. They call me a hummer from Hummersville at the store," continued Darcey, leaning one elbow on the counter and throwing back the other side of his jacket and sticking his thumb in the armhole of his vest.

"I wonder if that young swindler will honor this house with a visit?" said the clerk.

"I wouldn't be surprised. This hotel is patronized by traveling men, and you may expect to see him if he comes to this town," said Darcey.

At that moment Darcey's friends, who were in the conspiracy, entered the hotel and approached the desk. One of them said something to Darcey in a low tone. The bunch looked expectantly at the doorway. Presently Duncan entered, carrying his pair of suitcases.

"By George! This looks like the chap now," said Darcey to the clerk.

As Joe approached the desk with his baggage he found himself confronted by a hostile crowd, the head and front of which was Nick Darcey, his rival.

"You're a swindler!" cried Darcey, pointing his finger at him.

The bunch hooted. Duncan stopped in surprise, then, recognizing his business competitor, he continued up to the counter, regarding Darcey with a look of contempt. He judged this was some plan of the rival drummer to get back at him.

"I'll register, if you please," he said to the

clerk, who was leaning across the book staring at him, and particularly at the crescent-shaped pearl ornament in his scarf.

"Expect to stop here, young fellow?" asked the clerk aggressively.

"Yes; this is the house I've been recommended to," replied Joe.

"What's your business?"

"Commercial traveler."

"In what line?"

"Hardware specialties."

"How long do you expect to stay here?"

"Overnight. This house, I believe, is on the American plan. I'll leave after dinner tomorrow."

"Well, our terms are two dollars a day in advance."

"In advance!"

"Exactly—in advance."

"Isn't that unusual where people bring baggage with them?"

"Have you a trunk?"

"I carry a sample trunk, but I didn't consider it necessary to bring it here, for I have only one or two places to visit."

"Well, come up with two dollars, and then you can register."

Joe was now satisfied from the clerk's manner that he was being made a marker of, and he laid it to Darcey. Under such circumstances he decided he would not stop at the house, but go to the Galena Hotel, a higher-priced house, up the block.

"As I'm not in the habit of paying in advance, which I'm satisfied is not your regular custom, but simply directed at me for some reason, the author of which I can guess, I will not stop here, but go to another hotel," he said.

"Please yourself," grinned the clerk. "We won't go into bankruptcy if we are deprived of your custom."

As Joe turned away, the Darcey bunch shouted in one voice: "Swindler!"

Joe stopped and wheeled around.

"What do you mean by that, you loafers?" he said.

"Oh, you know what we mean," said Darcey. "I'm on to you now. You're the chap who stops at hotels, calls himself a traveler for a hardware specialty house, and sneaks before the week is out without paying his bill."

"You're a liar!" cried Joe, dropping his suitcase and making a rush at him.

CHAPTER V.—Darcey's Trick Puts Money in Joe's Pocket.

Darcey had no wish for another personal encounter with Duncan, so he quickly made a change of base behind his friends and hurled defiance at Joe. The boy tried to get at him, but the bunch clogged his efforts and jeered him. The result was he had to give it up. He returned to his suitcases and left the hotel amid hoots and catcalls.

"That's all Darcey's doings," he said to himself, on his way to the Galena Hotel. "If I catch him by himself, there'll be something doing."

As Darcey figured Joe was bound for the Ga-

lena Hotel, he went to the telephone and called that place up.

"This is the Bates House," he said. "Did you read that story in the News to-night about the ingenious hotel swindler?"

"Yes," said the clerk who answered him.

"The fellow is in town."

"How do you know?"

"He came in here a few minutes ago and wanted to register. He was recognized by the crescent-shaped pin in his scarf, and asked to pay in advance. He wouldn't do it and left, saying he was going to another hotel. I think it probable that he'll go to your house. If he does, make him come down with the price."

Darcey hung up the receiver, and he and his bunch went on to the other hotel to see the rest of the fun. Joe entered the Galena Hotel and went to the desk to register. The clerk sized him up sharply, and took particular notice of the crescent-shaped scarf pin. Joe registered. The clerk looked at his name and the place he wrote he was from—Chester.

"I'm a commercial traveler, with Prescott, Mason & Co., hardware specialties. I suppose you will accord me the usual rebate?"

"Certainly, if you can show me evidence that you are really what you say you are."

Joe pulled out his letter of identification bearing the P., M. & Co. printed heading, and signed by the head of the house.

"Want to see my samples, too?" he asked, lifting one of his grips on to the counter.

"You might give me a look as a matter of form," said the clerk.

Joe unlocked the suitcase and displayed some of his samples.

"The other case has the rest," he said.

"You're all right," said the clerk, satisfied that somebody at the Bates House had been stringing him. "You drummers usually put up at the Bates House," he added, as he assigned Duncan a room.

"So I believe, and I was recommended to go there; but I received such a peculiar notification, I judge, by a business rival of mine that I decided to come here," said Joe.

The clerk smiled.

"I guess I can throw a little light on it," he said.

"You can! How?"

The clerk picked the evening paper from under the counter, and, pointing to a paragraph, told Joe to read it. The boy did so, and his eyes opened pretty wide. He saw that it was aimed at him, and must have been the work of Darcey.

"It describes you in a general way," said the clerk; "but just before you came in here I got a short message, apparently from the Bates House, saying that this alleged swindler was in town and had been at the Bates House, where, on being asked to pay in advance, he had refused to do so. The message on the wire described you by that crescent pin in your scarf, and told me to look out for you. Evidently this is a trick that has been put up on you."

"There's no doubt about it, and that my enemy is at the back of it. I wonder how he managed to get that paragraph printed in the paper. Seems to me the paper is responsible for inserting fake news aimed to hurt a person."

"The paper mentioned no name, but at the same time has described you pretty accurately. A lawyer might find ground in it to sustain an action against the proprietor of the *News*. If I were in your shoes I think I'd see a lawyer about it. You can show that you were scurvily treated at the Bates House, presumably on account of the publication of the paragraph, and were in consequence compelled to patronize another hotel. Did the clerk at the Bates House insult you in any way?"

"No, I cannot say that he did, but he permitted my enemy and a bunch of his friends to insult me grossly," replied Joe.

"Then you might make trouble for him by calling on the proprietor and telling him how you were treated. It looks to me like a pretty mean trick, and if you can turn it back on the author of it, it would be a matter of satisfaction, I should think," said the clerk.

"If I can trace it to my business rival, I'll make things hot for him. I am certain he got it up out of revenge, but the question will be to prove it."

The clerk was a very pleasant young man, and he and Joe talked it over a while, and then the boy went in to supper. After the meal Joe bought a copy of the evening paper and studied the paragraph closely. The only points he saw about it that he could base any complaint on were the facts that it applied particularly to an eighteen-year-old boy, representing himself as a commercial traveler, and carrying two suitcases.

"If I put this thing in a lawyer's hands he might be able to force the editor of the paper to tell how he got hold of the piece of alleged news, and in this way I might trace it direct to Darcey and compel him to furnish the paper with a signed confession that the item was a malicious joke intended to injure me. On top of that I think I'd be likely to give him a sound thrashing in some public place. He's a mean rascal, about as mean as walks on two legs," thought Joe.

He had another talk on the subject with the clerk, and the manager of the hotel was brought into the conference. When that gentleman understood the case, he advised Joe to see a lawyer.

"But I can't afford to lose any time here going to law," said Duncan.

"Call on a lawyer anyhow and see if some quick action cannot be taken that will reach the party responsible for the rascally joke. You have more than a suspicion of the fellow's identity. All you need is to connect him directly with it. Here is a telephone book. You will find the home addresses of several lawyers without much trouble. I can refer you to a couple of good ones. Call right away on one of them. Explain that your time in town being very limited, you thought it advisable to visit the gentleman at his house to waiting until to-morrow when you might be too busy to call at his office. Explain the case and get his advice."

Joe decided to take the manager's advice. Two names and addresses were furnished him, and the manager sent a bellboy with him to show him the way to the first house. Lawyer Brown was in, and Joe was admitted to his library. Duncan introduced himself, explained why he had called, showed the lawyer the paragraph, told him how

he had been treated at the Bates House, and who he believed to be the author of the outrageous joke.

"If you wish me to act in this matter," said the lawyer, "I will write a letter to the owners of the *News*, demanding how the paper came in possession of the information printed in the paragraph, and threatening legal proceedings if a retraction is not printed at once. I shall also make a demand that the paper reimburse you for the expense you have been put to on account of the item. I will write a second letter to the proprietor of the Bates House, explaining the treatment you say you received at this house this evening, and demanding an investigation and an apology."

"All right," said Joe, "go ahead. What shall I pay you?"

"Well, I'll charge you ten dollars for this action, but I expect you will receive the money back from the newspaper, for the editor has, in my opinion, committed a serious blunder by printing the paragraph in question."

The lawyer told him to call at his office around noon on the following day, and promising that he would, Duncan returned to the hotel. Next morning he called on the house's customer and sold him a bill of goods. He then went around to see the other wholesaler, but found he could do nothing with him, for he was bound to Darcey. Leaving his grips at the hotel, he visited the lawyer. The proprietor of the Bates House was closeted with him. Joe was called in, and told the facts of the case, and cited his suspicions, which, he said, seemed to be pretty well established.

The lawyer had put in a claim for \$100 reparation for Duncan's injured feelings, and he told the hotel man that he thought his client had a good case against him. The proprietor promised to pay that amount if, on investigation, he found the facts to be as stated. He went away to look into the case. As the hotel man went out one of the owners of the paper came in with the managing editor. The case was gone into with them. The editor declared that the item had been printed in good faith, and did not aim at any one in particular.

"That's all right," said the lawyer, "but we want to know where you got your news. Either furnish the facts voluntarily or I'll apply to the court for an order compelling you to do it. My client has been made to suffer certain indignities at the hands of one hotel, and narrowly missed the same treatment at another. The story is a pure fake, and is so worded as to point in an indirect way at my client. An enemy of his has managed in some way to secure the insertion of the item. We ask you to look up the original copy and produce it, with a statement as to the channel through which it reached you. As soon as its falsehood is shown we shall request a denial of the story in your columns."

The editor promised to investigate it. Joe decided to remain in Galena till the matter was settled. The hotel man got a statement from his clerk, and also from the two bellboys. The clerk denied that he had permitted a prospective guest to be insulted by outsiders in the hotel, and defended his own action by producing the newspaper paragraph. The account given by the bellboys corroborated all that Joe had stated.

They said that a commercial man named Darcey, who had left that morning, was the cause of the disturbance, and that the clerk had winked at his action. The result was the clerk was discharged and the hotel man sent a \$100 check to the lawyer. At the newspaper office the investigation showed that the city editor got the information from his brother-in-law, and published it to oblige him. He got a severe calling down, and was told if suit was brought against the paper he would be held responsible for the outcome of it. The lawyer, on receiving a statement of the facts from the paper, demanded the address of the city editor's brother-in-law. Getting it, he sent a clerk to call on him and demand the name of the person for whom he had acted.

At first he refused to give it, when the clerk told him that he would at once be arrested and prosecuted as the author of the item. He then admitted that he had received the item from Darcey, and had it inserted in the paper as a favor to him. The clerk took him before a notary and got his sworn statement. The lawyer then made a demand on the managing editor for \$100 damages and a retraction that afternoon. As it was the easiest way out of the difficulty, the paper granted both of the demands.

The lawyer then sent for Joe, told him how the case had been settled, charged him \$50 for his services, and handed him \$150 as a balm to his feelings. Thus Joe made a nice little roll out of Darcey's piece of sharp practice, and he only regretted that he was not able to give the drummer a good whipping on top of it.

Several days later while on his way to a place named Groveton the engine of the train Joe was on broke down when near that place. Joe determined to foot it to Groveton, and started off. Before reaching his destination there came up a thunder shower and Joe entered an old shack beside the road which was not tenanted by any one as far as Joe could see. But he soon heard voices in another room talking of a robbery they were going to pull off, and at once Joe was interested. It was soon dark and Joe determined to follow the crooks and try to prevent the robbery of the farmer if possible. Joe kept perfectly still until he heard the thieves leave the building, and then he followed after them. They stopped at a well-kept farmhouse which had no light in the windows. Joe saw them force their way into the kitchen. Joe went around to the front and threw a couple of pebbles up against the window. Pretty soon the window was raised and a head poked out, asking what was wanted.

Joe explained there were thieves in the house. The man, who was the hired man, told Joe to wait, and he would let him in, as Mr. Crosby, the owner, was not at home, only the women.

In a few minutes the man appeared at the front door and let Joe in. The man had a club and a revolver. Joe got the revolver, and then they went upstairs quietly. Joe peered into one of the bedrooms and saw one robber looking into a bureau, another was putting ornaments in a bag, and a third was menacing the farmer's wife with a knife. Joe opened his mouth to speak, but the hired man and they burst into the room, taking the rascal by surprise.

CHAPTER VI.—A Prisoner in the River.

"Make a move, either of you, and I'll put a ball into you!" said Joe, covering the man at the bureau and his companion near by, alternately.

Both men were afraid to run the risk of a shot. While Joe was holding them in subjection, the hired man rushed at the other chap and dealt him a staggering blow as he turned to defend himself. A second blow knocked the short club out of his hand and almost broke his wrist. The rascal then threw up the sponge. The hired man seized a towel and bound his arms behind his back.

"Now secure one of these chaps. If he resists, I'll shoot him," said Joe.

The fellow with the pillow case full of plunder was tackled by the hired man, who threw him on the floor and tied his wrists together. That left only the biggest to be dealt with, and he had no chance to evade what was coming to him. Thus in a short time the three rascals were made prisoners and were marched out of the bedroom and downstairs, where they were more securely tied by a piece of clothes line.

"How far is it to town from here?" Duncan asked.

"Two miles and a half," replied the hired man.

"You'd better hitch up a wagon and we'll take them there and turn them over to the police. I'll watch them while you go and get the wagon ready."

The hired man agreed that Joe's suggestion was the proper thing to carry out, so he started to put it in practice. Before bundling the men into the wagon the hired man went upstairs and told the farmer's wife where he was going, and advised her to come downstairs and bolt the kitchen door, though it was unlikely that the inmates of the house would be disturbed again that night. The ride to town with the prisoners was an advantage to the young commercial traveler, for it saved him a walk over the country road. They reached Groveton inside of twenty minutes and landed the prisoners at the station house, where the hired man made the charge of burglary against them. When they were again outside he parted with the hired man and went directly to the hotel and registered. Next morning he visited his firm's customer and took his order. After dinner he went to the court where he made the acquaintance, and received the thanks, of Farmer Crosby. The three thieves were held for trial, and then the farmer, learning that Joe had completed his business in town, insisted on taking him home with him.

Arriving at the farmer's, he was introduced to Mrs. Crosby and her daughter. The latter had slept all through the trouble, and did not learn that the house had been entered by burglars until her mother told her next morning. The farmer tried to get the boy to accept \$100 as a present for his services, but Duncan declined to take it. Subsequently he sent Joe a handsome reward for his scarf, and the boy found it waiting for him when he returned to Groveton. Joe spent the rest of the afternoon at the farm, had supper with the family, and was driven back in time to take the last train for

Janesville. As it was very doubtful if he could be present at the trial of the three hoboes, when it took place, he left his sworn deposition in the hands of the police.

From Janesville, Joe continued on down the river to Fredrickton, where he again encountered Darcey at the hotel. They met as strangers, and Duncan hoped that he would have no further trouble with his enemy. But in that hope he was disappointed. He finished the week at Frederickton, holding up his end in good shape, and forwarding several big orders to his firm. He decided to remain over till Sunday night in the place. On Saturday night he visited one of the theaters, and was on his way home from the show when he was suddenly attacked on the street by a bunch of ruffians, forced down an alley leading to the river, and run into a low-grade house, the ground floor of which was used as a saloon.

He was carried into a back room, drugged liquor poured down his throat, and then taken down into the cellar, where he speedily became unconscious. Two hours later he was put on board a weather-beaten sloop on the point of starting down the river. Daylight was well advanced when he recovered his senses, and found himself tied up to the mast in the hold. At first he had no idea where he was, but the motion of the craft, and the indistinct outlines of the hold soon apprised him where he was.

He remembered all that had happened to him the night before, and wondered why he had been placed in his present situation. He never suspected that Darcey was at the bottom of the matter and had hired the rascals to carry him off his route as far as possible. The sloop was a crazy-looking craft of ancient vintage, which had been picked up for a song by an enterprising huckster, who used it to bring garden truck and fruit he purchased cheap down or up the river to Frederickton. This stuff he peddled through the residential section of the town, in wagons in charge of men he hired for the purpose. These men were toughs, both physically and morally, and only worked because they needed the money.

The huckster was practically a graduate from their ranks, endowed with energy and the ambition to get ahead, and he was able to control his rough subordinates and make them come to time, for they found it to their interest to stand in with him, since he was the only source of steady income they could count on. During the winter they drew on him when they couldn't raise the wind through petty thievery that often landed them in the workhouse during cold weather.

Darcey had got acquainted with a member of the bunch by accident, and finding out that he and his companions were open to any piece of small rascality for pay, he arranged with the bunch to do up his business rival in the way we have described. Joe found his quarters far from pleasant in any sense. The hold smelt of decayed refuse, with which it was littered.

"I wonder where I'm being carried off to," he asked himself. "I suppose I've been cleaned out of my watch and loose change. I don't see why I should have been put aboard this craft. Maybe I was carried here on the quiet by the crowd that got me, and that these aboard don't know of my presence in the hold. There's a fierce odor down

here. Perhaps this boat is used for carrying some kind of fertilizer. Lord, it's giving me a headache."

The hatch did not fit tight, and there were cracks in it, too, where the wood had split, and these openings admitted gleams of daylight, and acquainted Duncan with the fact that it was Sunday morning and that he had been unconscious many hours. The sloop was sailing along easily under a light wind. He heard footsteps on the deck occasionally, and once in a while a voice. Joe tried his bonds and after some effort freed one of his arms. This loosened up the rope so that he got the other arm out, and in a short time got free altogether. That was a great relief to him. He felt in his pocket and found, as he had surmised, that his watch and money were gone. So also was his pocketknife and his silver-plated match safe. He missed the latter badly, for he was unable to strike a light and look around the hold as he would like to have done.

What he couldn't do with his eyes he was obliged to accomplish through his sense of touch. He found the hold was empty except for the litter of vegetable remains. There was a bulkhead forward and another one aft. The first shut off a small compartment used for cooking purposes, the latter a small, ill-smelling cabin, where the huckster and the two companions who sailed with him slept. The huckster was not on board on this occasion, nor was he aware that his sloop had been taken possession of by his employees for the purpose of carrying their victim down the river a certain distance to carry their bargain with Darcey.

The bunch expected to fetch the craft back to her moorings by dark, and hoped their escapade would not reach the huckster's ears, for they knew if it did they would get a calling down. In the event that he did find out they had taken the boat without his permission, they intended to tell him they had done it to enjoy a Sunday sail. Both bulkheads were warped and had cracks between the timbers, and had Joe been able to strike a light it probably would have been noticed by the chaps who were in the cabin. Joe peered through a wide crack and saw four of them seated at a narrow table, playing cards. The fifth member of the party was outside steering. The conversation the boy listened to was not particularly edifying.

He learned nothing from it as he was not the subject of their discourse. However, from the looks of the crowd he judged they were not honest river sharps and he was satisfied he owed all his troubles to them. That mystified him still more as to why he was aboard of the craft. An hour passed away and the bunch quit playing. They produced paper bags from one of the two lockers and began making their breakfast of sandwiches, cheese and some bottled beer they had brought along. While they were eating, Joe crept forward to examine the forward bulkhead.

Here he found the boards loose and he wondered what space was beyond them. It was dark in the kitchen compartment so that he could not make out anything in there. One of the boards was broken in the center, and Joe taking hold of the loose end of it, pulled it apart, and in doing so made some noise. He managed to squeeze

himself through the opening, and feeling around, encountered the small stove set in an iron pan full of sand. This discovery enlightened him as to the nature of the compartment, and further investigation, made in a cautious way, revealed the pots, pans and other articles used to prepare meals by the huckster on his short river cruises.

Joe's fingers lighted on a box of matches. He lighted one and put the rest in his pocket. He saw there was an opening above covered with a scuttle. It was easy to reach and he tried it. To his great satisfaction he found it was not secured on the outside. Lifting the cover a little and looking aft, he saw the bunch of toughs standing about the cockpit in lazy attitudes. The sun was shining brightly and the sky was clear. Joe caught a glimpse of both shores and saw only an occasional house. Some distance ahead a large schooner was traveling in the same direction as the sloop, but the wind was so light that her progress was very sluggish.

Joe judged that the craft he was on would pass close to her, and he determined when the two craft were abreast to spring overboard and swim to the larger vessel. He was a good swimmer and knew he could easily accomplish the slight feat. He closed the scuttle and sat on the stove to pass the time. After a while he took another look, but the distance between the two craft had not materially decreased. Half an hour passed and he heard the sound of steps on the deck and the hatch was raised. Joe, looking through the hole he had made in the bulkhead, saw a flood of light shining into the hold. Two of the toughs jumped down. He knew they had come to take a look at him, and when they found him missing from the mast they would start to hunt for him, and, of course, he would be found in the cooking compartment if he didn't make a change of base to the deck, where he would have to encounter the others.

His absence from the mast was speedily discovered, and with exclamations of surprise the two rascals ran to the hatch and shouted the news to their pals on deck. Two more jumped down into the hold, leaving only the chap at the wheel above. Joe decided now was the time to make a move. He opened the scuttle, sprang out and shut it down. Unfortunately, there was no way of fastening it on the outside. He rushed to the main hatch and drew it over the hatchway, temporarily shutting the four toughs down in the hold. The chances of keeping them under cover was not good, for he could not watch both openings at the same time. Besides, the steersman had to be reckoned with. As the wind was light, he could easily leave his post to chip in, and that is just what he did. Thus Joe found himself between three fires, so to speak.

CHAPTER VII.—What Happened on the Island.

"Here, what are you up to?" demanded the steersman, as he jumped on the deck with his fists doubled up, ready for action.

"What do you suppose I'm up to?" Trying to prevent you fellows doing me up again," returned Joe.

The tough sprang at him, aiming a blow at

his head, and looking for an easy victory. Joe sidestepped, shot out his fist, caught the tough under the chin and sent him staggering back. At that moment the cookroom scuttle was thrown off and one of the chaps below stuck up his head.

He was in time to see the steersman lose his balance, clutch at the boom and roll overboard, hitting the water with a splash and a loud cry for help. Joe saw that the fellow couldn't swim, and not wishing to be responsible for his drowning, he picked up a coil of rope and flung it toward him as he disappeared beneath the surface of the river. When the rascal came up, he hit the rope with his hand and clutched it as a drowning man will a plank or anything at hand.

All this gave one of the other chaps time to scramble on deck, and he started for Joe. Duncan saw him coming, and, tossing him the rope, told him to save his friend. Instead of doing so, he sprang at the boy traveler, and Joe had to defend himself. In the fight that took place the tough was presently assisted by his friends, as they reached the deck one by one, and so Joe was overpowered and made prisoner again. The chap who went overboard was pulled on deck in a half-drowned condition, and left to recover by himself while the others hustled Duncan back into the hold and tied him to the mast again, taking extra precautions this time.

The scrap had been observed from the schooner's deck, and those there wondered what it was all about. Half an hour later when the two boats were near each other, the toughs were hailed and asked for an explanation.

"It was just a fight," said one of them. "The rooster knocked one of us overboard and we jumped on him for it, and now we've got him tied up in the hold till he sobers up."

The people on the schooner accepted the statement and asked no more questions. The sloop gradually forged ahead, and in the course of time left the larger boat farther and farther behind. A turn in the river took them out of sight of each other, and brought into view another sloop coming up the stream. Shortly after noon another bend in the river brought the sloop close to a long, narrow island.

"There it is," said one of the toughs. "Run in close to the bank."

The speaker went forward, picked up the mooring line and stood ready to jump ashore. The sloop closed in with the island by degrees and finally bumped against the bluff. The fellow at the bow sprang on shore and tied the rope to a tree. Then he returned on board. Four of the bunch got down into the hold, released Joe from the mast, wound the line around his legs and arms so that he was helpless and handed him up on deck.

"What are you fellows going to do with me?" he asked.

"Hang yer if you don't keep yer trap shut," said the leader. "Fetch him along."

In a few moments Joe was carried ashore and into the trees that covered that end of the island. He was carried to a small house that stood in a little clearing near by. It was an ancient, weather-beaten old one story shack, the floor of which shook under the feet of the crowd. It contained a few dilapidated pieces of old-fashioned furniture, with a rude bunk in one corner.

"We'll tie him so he can reach the knot and set himself free after a while. That will give us time to get away. It's nothin' to us how soon he gets away; for we've earned our money bringing him here."

Joe wondered at the words.

"Who paid you to bring me to this place?" he asked.

"Oh, a chap who wanted to get you out of the way. Sit down in that chair or we'll make you."

"You'll have to make me," said Duncan, pulling one arm free and hitting out at the speaker, and landing on his jaw. The whole bunch seized him and flung him bodily into the chair. The building trembled under the shock, then the rotten floor gave way suddenly and everybody went down into a sort of low cellar, as dark as pitch. One of the toughs was knocked unconscious, another had his arm broken, a third was severely cut by a jagged plank, while the fourth floundered around quite dazed by the accident.

The only one who was not greatly upset by the fall, though in the midst of it, was Joe himself.

He quickly extricated himself by rolling to one side. He unwound the long rope from about his body in a twinkling and got on his feet. The light that came down from the room above was very little as the door of the shack was at the other end, and the building was enclosed by trees. Cries of pain, imprecations, and smothered groans reached his ears, and showed that his captors had suffered severely by the accident. He did not propose to stand idly by till they recovered and thought of him. He understood their purpose, which was to maroon him on the island, and he more than suspected that the person who had hired them to play such a rascally trick on him was Darcey, for he knew of nobody else who had anything against him. He looked for something above he could lay hold of and pull himself out.

A broken beam was almost within his reach. He sprang up and caught it. A gymnastic swing or two enabled him to raise himself up so that he got his arms around it. The rest was not difficult for an agile youth like him, and soon he was cautiously crawling across the dilapidated floor toward the door. Once outside, he knew what to do. He pushed through the trees toward the spot where the sloop was moored in charge of the helmsman. When he came in sight of the craft the chap in question was not in sight. He had gone into the cabin to feast on a bit of cold grub, which he washed down with beer. Joe released the mooring rope, jumped on the bow and pushed the sloop away from the bluff with his leg. The motion he imparted to the craft attracted the attention of the fellow in the cabin, and he came out to see if his friends had returned. Instead of which he saw, to his consternation, the prisoner. How their victim could have escaped from his four companions was a mystery to him, but he had no time to consider the matter for Joe was upon him. The young commercial traveler lost no time in going for the only enemy he now had to fear. He slammed him in the jaw with his right and left in quick succession. Then he closed with him and tripped him up on the floor, where he rolled him over on his face, in spite of his struggles, and bound his wrists with a piece of cord that

lay there. Then he hauled him out of the cabin to the top of the deck, pulled off the hatch and dropped him down, feet first so as not to hurt him.

"Stay there, and see how you like it," said Joe, pulling the hatch two-thirds over the hole.

Then he went to the tiller, and though not much of a boatman, he managed in that light breeze to wear the sloop around and head her back up the river. How the four toughs were to get off the island did not greatly concern him. They had fallen into the pit they had dug for him, and he saw no reason to waste any sympathy over them. As long as the island remained in sight they did not appear on top of the bluff looking for their craft, and when the sloop rounded the near-by bend the island dropped out of his line of vision.

It was now half-past one and the reader will not be surprised when we say that Joe was a mighty hungry boy, for he had had no breakfast nor dinner, nor even a bite, that day. He had eaten his last meal at six o'clock the evening before, and he yearned to reach a restaurant and fill up. There was small chance of his running close to a restaurant till he got back to Frederickton, and that town was many miles up the river. But for the sensation of hunger that assailed him Joe would have enjoyed the sail, for the day was fine and he found no trouble in keeping the sloop on a straight course. Within half an hour he made out the lumbering schooner he had at one time expected to make his escape to. Now that was unnecessary. He had rescued himself, and did not stand in need of help. The men aboard of the schooner eyed him curiously when the boats passed. He looked different from the toughs they had seen on board before. The skipper hailed him.

"Where's the crew that was on that craft when she passed down?" he asked.

"They went ashore on the island a mile below here," replied Duncan.

"What did they land there for?"

"You'd better put in there and ask them."

"How came you aboard the sloop? I didn't see you before."

"You might have if you had looked close enough."

The boats were now some ways apart and further conversation was discontinued. Joe saw two other craft coming down the river. They were large sailboats occupied by young men out for pleasure.

"How far is it to Frederickton?" said Joe, hailing one party.

"Eight or nine miles," was the reply.

Soon afterward the sloop rounded the other bend and Joe saw a long freight train coming down the river track at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. As time passed he grew positively famished, and wondered how long before he would reach the end of his trip. The breeze was most exasperatingly light and the sloop seemed to crawl along. There was nothing for him to do but grin and bear his hunger as best he could.

Suddenly he thought about his watch, money and other property that had been taken from him. Leaving the tiller to the care of itself, he went into the hold and searched his prisoner. He recovered his watch and a small part of his

money, something less than \$2. The fellow made a vehement protest.

"Shut up!" cried Joe. "You fellows cleaned me out, and I'm trying to get my things back. I suppose your friends have the rest of my property?"

The tough made no reply.

"Look here, who was the fellow who hired you chaps to do me up?"

"None of your business," replied the other.

"All right, then, I'll have you arrested as soon as the sloop gets back to Frederickton, and see if you'll tell in court."

"You can't make me tell nothin'."

"Very well. I guess I know the man. He's an enemy of mine named Darcey, and I'll fix him for the trick if I catch him. He'll have to make good all I've lost."

Joe left the fellow and returned to the tiller. Two hours later he sighted Frederickton, and it was seven o'clock when he tied the sloop to the first wharf he came to. He left his prisoner in the hold and started up the street. A block away he met a policeman. To him he told his story and said he had captured one of the toughs.

"What did you do with him?"

"I left him tied in the hold of the sloop."

"Will you prosecute him if I run him in?"

"I expected to leave town to-night. I'm a commercial traveler for a firm in Chester, and I can't spare the time to appear against him."

"You'd better remain over half a day and have this chap put through. You say the others are on the island down the river? The captain of the station house might send a boat after them and then you would have the chance to send the whole bunch to the workhouse for a year."

"If I thought I'd recover the rest of my property, I'd stay over till to-morrow," said Joe.

"You may if the others are caught," said the officer.

Joe went to the wharf with him and the prisoner was brought out of the hold. The policeman recognized him as one of the huckster's crowd, and the boat as the huckster's property. The fellow was taken to the station house, and there Duncan entered a charge of assault, robbery and abduction against him. He was locked up and Joe made tracks for the nearest restaurant, where he ate a big meal and then went to the hotel.

CHAPTER VIII.—In Queer Company.

He told the manager of the hotel what had happened to him. He asked if Darcey was still at the house, and learned that he had left that morning with his baggage.

"The rascal!" thought Joe. "He has gone on his way congratulating himself that he had reached me at last. How disappointed he'd be if he knew how things turned out!"

Next morning Joe appeared at the court to prosecute the tough. He found that the police had caught the rest of the party and had taken possession of the sloop. All of Duncan's property had been recovered, but the police held it as evidence against the prisoners. The huckster was in court trying to get an order for the return of his sloop. He swore that his employee

had taken his boat without his permission or knowledge.

The magistrate was inclined to doubt his statement, for he did not bear a good character; but as nothing was brought against him, he was allowed to have his boat. The five toughs were held for trial, and Duncan was told he would have to return to Frederickton when wanted, to appear against them. After dinner Joe proceeded on his way.

During the two weeks that followed he did not encounter Darcey. His success on the road was better than ever, and Mr. Prescott remarked to his partner that Duncan was the boy with the "goods."

"We made a ten-strike by giving him an opening," said Mason. "It is a case of the unexpected coming to the front. From all indications he is likely to prove a star salesman."

The second Sunday after Joe left Frederickton he was in the town of Smithland. He expected to remain there two days, not counting Sunday. He had heard that Darcey was there, too, but he was not stopping at the hotel where he put up. Darcey was well acquainted in Smithland, and he numbered over half of the wholesale houses among his customers. Only one firm handled P., M. & Co.'s goods direct. Joe understood all this, and he looked for a hard fight to get his work in with any of the others.

He was seated in the reading room after supper figuring out his plan of action for the next day when a bellboy came to him and said a gentleman wanted to see him. As Joe was a complete stranger in town he wondered who the visitor could be, and what he wanted with him. He followed the bellboy to the rotunda, where he found the party, whom he had never seen before, waiting for him. He was a tall, thin man, of a sandy complexion, and a pair of calculating eyes. He introduced himself as Hiram Handy, a hardware man of the town.

"I saw by the *Hardware News*, published yesterday, that you were expected to reach here by to-morrow, so I dropped in at this hotel, where the regular drummers put up, to see if you had arrived," said Mr. Handy.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Handy," said Joe. "What house are you connected with?"

"Knowlton & Co."

Duncan knew that Knowlton & Co. was supposed to be a dyed-in-the-wood customer of Bryant & Co., and consequently was down on his list as a Darcey man. He was, therefore, much surprised that the gentleman should take any interest in him.

"I am selling for Prescott, Mason & Co.," Joe said, thinking Handy might have got his name twisted with Darcey's.

"Yes, so I understand. You have taken on George French's route."

His answer proved that there was no mistake in the case.

"You see," he continued, "we have been buying right along from a man named Darcey who represents Bryant & Co. This last season we have had a lot of trouble with their goods. They have proved unacceptable to our trade, and a lot of them have been turned back on our hands. Investigation showed that they were cast iron instead of being wrought iron, as represented. We

wrote to Bryant & Co., asking them to take back the goods, but they refused to do so, or make us any allowance. So we have decided to cut out their goods altogether and put in a full line of the P., M. & Co.'s stock. That is the reason I called to make your acquaintance."

"I intended to call at your house, though I knew my firm had done no business with you, and try to convince you that the genuine brand was better than the cheaper and imitation ones," Joe said. "I have picked up many new customers in this way since I started out. An imitation article cannot stand the test of competition with the genuine. Sooner or later those who handle the former wake up, as you seem to have done, and throw the poor article out."

Although Joe never attempted to sell anything on Sunday he saw no reason why he shouldn't pave the way to the capture of Knowlton & Co., on whom he intended to make an early call next morning, by talking up his line. Handy listened, smiled, and nodded as he went on.

"You have a good line of argument," he said, "and you will have no trouble in getting our name to a large order when you see Mr. Knowlton in the morning. And now, as I suppose you have nothing on hand for the evening, I shall be glad to take you out to my club, the Meadowbrook Polo Association. We have a fine clubhouse on the county road, about a mile outside the town limits. My car is outside. We have a musical entertainment this evening, and I think you will enjoy yourself. I will see that you get back here around eleven o'clock."

Of course Joe accepted the invitation. He considered it something of an honor to be invited to such a place. It was seldom that he had the chance to take an auto ride, and he was not going to miss this one. He was greatly tickled at the prospect of putting it over Darcey by getting another customer away from him. And according to his advice, Knowlton & Co. was his best customer in that place.

So he accompanied Handy outside, stepped into the vehicle and off they rolled. It was a fine evening and Joe enjoyed the ride hugely. They gradually reached the outskirts, and passed into the country road, which was a splendid macadamized route. A mile was reeled off quickly and then a second mile. Joe was wondering how much farther they had to go when a large, walled-in building hove in sight around a turn and the auto drove up to the big iron gate. Duncan saw a large plate attached to one of the stone gate posts, and he came to the conclusion that this was the club house of the polo organization, though he was rather surprised that things were so quiet about it, particularly if there was a musical entertainment on the books for that evening.

The chauffeur, who was a negro, got down and pulled the bell. A man came to the gate from a lodge close by, held a short conversation with him, and then started to open the big gate. The negro got into the car, backed around and ran into the grounds.

"Is this the Meadowbrook Clubhouse?" Joe asked Handy.

"This is the place," replied his companion.

"Seems to be rather quiet for a clubhouse."

"The front always is. It is a very select or-

ganization. As it is Sunday evening, few lights are displayed in sight of the road. When you get inside you'll find things different."

The car rolled up to the veranda, and Handy and Joe alighted. The former rang the bell and in a few minutes the door was opened by a man in a sort of undress uniform. They were ushered into a small ante-room lighted by an elegant lamp dependent from the ceiling. The attendant went away and in a short time a small, slightly built man, with piercing black eyes and a professional look, made his appearance. He shook hands with Handy and then the latter said:

"Let me make you acquainted with Joseph Duncan."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Duncan. Are you a commercial traveler?"

"Yes, how did you guess my business?" said Joe, in some surprise.

"I'm an excellent hand at guessing. What house do you represent?"

"Prescott, Mason & Co., of Chester; hardware specialties."

"Has the entertainment begun yet?" asked Handy.

"Not yet. It is about to commence. We had better adjourn to the hall."

The black-eyed man led the way, and they followed through a long, well-furnished hall.

"I didn't catch the gentleman's name," said Joe to Handy.

"Pardon me. I remember now that I failed to mention it. This is Dr. Linx, the head of the club," replied Handy.

Before anything more could be said, the doctor opened a door and they entered a large room where about thirty men were seated, facing a small stage. Three or four attendants were standing around with long rattans in their hands and Joe was surprised to see one of them shake his implement at a man occupying an inside seat. At one side of the stage was a piano, at which a young man was seated, with his head covered with wavy raven hair, supported by one hand, his elbow resting on the music rest of the instrument, while his eyes surveyed the audience.

The doctor walked down the center aisle after pointing out a couple of rear chairs, apart from the crowd, for Handy and his companion to take possession of. Although the audience was very orderly at that moment, there was something odd in the general ensemble that attracted Joe's attention. Dr. Linx stepped to the platform and surveyed the crowd in front of him. The hum in the room subsided, and the attention of the persons present concentrated itself on the little black-eyed man. He walked to a chair close to the piano and sat down, making a signal to the musician. That person immediately struck up an artistic selection. Two men in the front row sprang up and started to dance in a grotesque way, and a number of others began to clap in an excited way. To Joe's amazement an attendant rushed forward and swung his rattan across the shoulders of the dancers. They slunk back into their chairs like dogs who feared a beating.

"Say, what's all this?" said Joe to his companion.

"Are you surprised?" asked Handy, with a chuckle.

"What kind of club is this, anyway?"

"Pardon me for the joke I have played on you. This isn't a club."

"What is it, then?"

"A private bughouse, and the people you see in the seats are the patients."

CHAPTER IX.—The Woman in the Cellar.

Before the boy could ask further questions the musician stopped, then changed to a ragtime air and two men, dressed as German comedians, appeared from behind the narrow stage. The music stopped and they started in to entertain the audience with the customary vaudeville funny business of their line. Joe saw that they were professional talent, hired for the occasion. The audience went into spasms of delight over their eccentricities, and two or three of the more restive ones had to be suppressed by an attendant, who handled them without gloves.

The Dutch act wound up with a comic duet and a dance, which produced more excitement and more applications of the attendants' rattans. The next number on the programme was a musical act by three performers, who found the narrow stage cramped their efforts to a considerable extent. Things went pretty smoothly, all things considered, until the last number was reached—a pair of Irish sidewalk conversationalists. Their patter was seemingly appreciated and vociferously applauded.

In fact, the demented audience insisted on a recall, and one of them came out and began a recitation. This was only a bluff, for hardly had it got started when the other came out, tapped him on the shoulder and pointed off. The first kept on as if he didn't hear. Then the second brought out a short step-ladder, placed it against his shoulder, climbed up and shouted through a trumpet in his ear. This produced no result either. The second then pulled out a hatchet, landed the edge of it in his prepared wig, where it stuck, and walked off. As the first chap turned and the whole audience saw the hatchet sticking apparently in his head, with one accord the crazy people rose, like a flock of birds startled by the report of a gun. They began yelling and running about in great confusion. The four attendants attacked them and Dr. Linx sprang on his feet. Instead of quelling the trouble, a regular riot ensued.

Chairs were flung at the doctor, at the attendants, and at the candelabra. Handy grabbed Joe and pulled him toward the door. Crash followed crash as the chandeliers were demolished. The attendants, with imprecations, tried their best to quell the tumult by using their rattans with the utmost vigor, but their efforts were in vain, and they themselves were in turn attacked, knocked down and pounded into unconsciousness. Doctor Linx rushed away by a back entrance, telling the two Irish comedians to make tracks as they were for their lives, and called more help to the scene. Joe and his companion were cut off from the door, and got separated in the confusion.

Light after light went out under the onslaught of the frantic lunatics, now beyond all control, and Duncan, after being drawn over to-

ward the stage, made a leap for it, but was pulled back by somebody in the darkness. A crash followed and the piano tumbled off the stage, knocking a hole in the floor. Through this hole Joe fell in his efforts to escape, and he landed down in the cellar and lay there some minutes half dazed. The uproar continued above, deadened somewhat by the intervening floor. At length he pulled himself together and started to find his way out.

He struck a match and examined his surroundings. He was in a storeroom, the door of which was locked.

"I must get out of here somehow," he thought.

He saw a box of tools, and, pulling out a hammer and a broad chisel he soon made short work of the wood around the lock and got the door open. The cellar was a large one, extending underneath the entire building, and was divided into rooms and compartments used for different purposes. There were many passages, crossing one another, and proved to be a regular labyrinth to Joe, who could not find the stairs. There were two sets of stairs, affording ingress and egress, but both were closed from sight by doors, and these doors the boy supposed connected with rooms. Finally he came to three iron-barred cells in one corner, where refractory patients were put at times. When Duncan came to them he was surprised to see a woman's face behind the bars of one. She looked at him in the dim light of a gas jet in a piteous way.

"Will you not take pity on me and release me from this cell?" she said, in a pathetic tone. "I am not mad. I never have been mad. I am confined here by a relative who wishes me out of the way. Unless somebody comes to my relief, I shall never get free again."

"Who are you?" asked Joe.

"My name is Lillian Wrenn, and my husband is dead. It is his brother who put me here in a living death to secure my property. Doubtless I have been reported to my brother, George Prescott, of Chester, as having gone traveling for my health to the Pacific Coast."

"George Prescott, of Chester!" exclaimed Joe, in surprise. "Is he in the hardware business?"

"Yes; he is head of the firm of Prescott, Mason & Co."

"Why, I am one of their traveling salesmen."

"You are!" cried the woman, with a ring of hope in her tones. "Then you will aid me, will you not?"

"I will if I can; but if you have been properly committed to this place, it would be a serious matter for me to help you get away."

"But I am the victim of a conspiracy."

"As it is probable I would not be able to get you away without discovery, the best thing I can do is to communicate with your brother, tell him where you are, and ask him to come on and rescue you himself."

The lady explained that when her husband died he had left his property with his brother in trust for her, unaware that the man was the rascal he soon proved himself to be.

"How long have you been in this house?" Joe asked her.

"Nearly six months."

"Why are you down here in a cell in this place?"

"Because sometimes I go nearly wild over the thought that I am buried alive, as it were, and then, I dare say, I act so unruly that I am brought here and kept until I quiet down."

Joe took down her brother-in-law's name and address, and all the facts he believed necessary to forward to Mr. Prescott.

"I shall bless you all my life if I escape from this tomb through your help," she said.

"I will see that your brother learns all the particulars. I will mail the letter early in the morning and he should get it by Tuesday. He will, of course, come on at once, and probably you will be released Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning. Now tell me where the stairs are so I can get out."

"You will find a door at the end of this passage that opens on a flight of stairs leading to the main floor above. But you have not told me how you came to be in this cellar, at night, too," she said.

Joe told her the cause of the disturbance, and how he came to be present in the sanitarium that evening. Then telling her to keep up her courage, he left her and sought the stairs. When he reached the main floor he found that the patients had been overpowered and taken to their rooms.

"Where have you been all this time?" asked an attendant.

"After being pulled about in the room, I fell through a hole in the floor near the stage into the cellar, and there I've been ever since. I had to break a locked door open to get out of the room I dropped into, and then I found my way up here."

"The hole was made by the heavy piano falling from the stage. It was lucky no one was hurt by it."

Joe was taken to the doctor's ante-room, where he was found talking with Mr. Handy, who appeared puzzled over his companion's disappearance.

"Oh, here you are!" said the doctor, when Joe appeared. "Where have you been?"

Joe told his story, giving the impression that he had been badly stunned by his fall, and that satisfied both men as to the cause of his failure to turn up before.

"I'm afraid you'll think I brought you into a scrape," said Handy.

"Well, the way things turned out was not your fault," replied the boy.

"It was that confounded encore with the hatchet business that did the damage," said the doctor. "I shouldn't have permitted it had I known what was coming. Anything startling or unusual has a bad effect on people whose minds are in the state some of my patients are. It was like touching off a gunpowder fuse—the excitement spread like magic and for the time being we lost control of all of them. Such a condition is always dangerous. It's the first time such a thing has happened in my sanitarium, and I'll see it shall be the last."

"Well, Duncan, let us go. I guess you'll be glad to get outside," said Handy.

"I won't be sorry," laughed Joe.

The auto was standing outside waiting for them, and they were soon rolling out of the grounds and along the road to van Smithland.

On the way back Handy explained that Doctor Linx was a great friend of his, and had invited him out that evening to his sanitarium to see how his patients behaved at the show, to which they were occasionally treated.

"I decided to take you with me for company," he went on. "For fear you might object to going to a madhouse, I told you I was going to take you to the Meadowbrook Club. You will pardon the deception. The truth of the matter is, I wanted to see what you would say when you saw the kind of audience that was assembled to see the show. I deeply regret that you were so roughly handled, and were hurt by falling into the cellar; but that was entirely unexpected."

"That's all right. You can make it up by seeing that your firm gives me a good order to-morrow," said Joe, willing to forgive anything that helped him to new business.

"You'll get a good order, for we have arranged to throw the Bryant & Co.'s goods out entirely. As soon as we receive our new stock we shall send our old stock of inferior stuff to an auction house to be disposed of at what they will fetch."

"It will be a surprise to Darcey, Bryant & Co.'s man, for your house has been his largest customer in this place."

"We can't help that. We are looking after our own interests and not his."

"I heard Darcey was in town. You haven't seen him yet, I suppose?"

"No. We know he's here, at the Baxter House, and we look for him to call in the morning. We won't lose much time over him on this occasion. What time shall I look for you to call at the store?"

"I can make it convenient to call at any hour," said Joe.

"Make it eleven o'clock, then. Ask for me."

Ten minutes later Duncan was put down at his hotel. Before going to his room he wrote a long letter to Mr. Prescott about the woman he had met in the sanitarium, and who claimed to be his sister. He mailed it in the hotel letter box, the contents of which would be collected in time to go out by the early mail. Then he went to bed, thinking of the jolt Darcey would get when he found he had lost his best Smithland customer, and that he (Joe) had captured the firm.

CHAPTER X.—Conclusion.

Joe left the hotel early next morning and made his first call on the regular customer of his firm. He found the manager preparing a long order to mail to his employers, so he was just in time to save his commission. He showed his line of improved tools, and the manager made many changes in his order in consequence. Altogether both parties were benefited by the visit. At eleven o'clock he walked into Knowlton & Co.'s, and asked for Mr. Handy. He was shown into the gentleman's office.

"Darcey is here talking to Mr. Knowlton, but all his argument will do him no good. We are done for good with his line," said Handy.

In a short time Darcey was dismissed, and he left the store looking about as mad as any fer-

low could. Handy then took Joe in and introduced him to the senior partner. The boy spent an hour and a half in the store, and when he left he carried an order that he was satisfied would make his firm sit up and take notice.

"When Mr. Mason sees this order," said Joe to himself, "he'll feel inclined to raise my wages. Of course I've caught the house more through the trouble the firm had with their last consignment of Bryant & Co.'s goods, than the result of my own efforts; but that doesn't matter. I'll get all the credit. It's no small thing to catch a house like Knowlton & Co., no matter how you do it. I guess this is the biggest success I've made on the trip so far."

After dinner he continued his rounds. In three places he found Darcey had got his work in ahead of him, and he could do nothing, but he got an order out of the fourth place that carried Darcey's line, though the order was not a big one, and only embraced the latest production bearing the P., M. & Co. trade-mark. That evening Darcey came around to his hotel and assumed a friendly attitude.

"What have you done in this place?" he said. "French never had but one customer. I consider this my burg."

"I called on four of your customers this afternoon and got only a small order out of one of them," said Joe.

"Just so. No use of you staying here on the chance of doing better."

"I'm satisfied with results. I caught the biggest house in town—Knowlton & Co.—this morning."

"The dickens you did! Why, that's my——"

"You mean it was your customer; but the senior member of the firm told me that he had no further use for your goods—they don't measure up to his wants. I knew your imitations would get it in the neck as soon as people got on to them."

Darcey looked black on learning that his rival had got the house he lost. He turned on his heel and walked away. Joe called on the other houses next morning and took it easy in the afternoon. At five o'clock he was in the reading room when somebody tapped him on the shoulder. Looking up, he saw Mr. Prescott.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Prescott!" he said, jumping up.

"Let us go outside," said the merchant. "I got your letter and was dumfounded by the news it contained. The lady you wrote about is certainly my sister, and she seems to be the victim of the basest treachery. Your accidental discovery of her present condition was most providential, and I never can thank you enough for your prompt action in her behalf. I must go before a judge, state the facts and secure her immediate release. I shall then proceed against her husband's brother for criminal conspiracy."

"It is after five o'clock now, sir. Can you do anything to-day?"

"I shall call at the home of one of the judges with my lawyer, whom I brought with me, and I shall endeavor to bring about her release to-night. If the proprietor of the sanitarium is guilty of aiding or abetting in the case, I shall prosecute him, too," said Mr. Prescott.

Joe was introduced to the lawyer. After Dun-

can had gone over the particulars again, the two gentlemen went away. Mr. Prescott succeeded in convincing the judge he called upon that a wrong had been done to his sister, and he secured an order for her release. He hired a car and with his lawyer proceeded to the sanitarium and asked for Dr. Linx. When they were admitted to that gentleman's office, the lawyer presented the order for the release of Mrs. Lillian Wrenn. The doctor was taken by surprise, and protested that the lady was of unsound mind and had been placed in his care by her brother-in-law, Henry Wrenn.

"I am her brother," said Mr. Prescott, "and I will assume all the responsibility in the matter. In any case, you have to obey the order and give her up to me."

So Mr. Prescott's sister was turned over to him and the overjoyed woman went back to town and to a hotel with her brother, and she was deeply grateful to the young commercial traveler for the part he had taken in securing her freedom. Joe had the pleasure of meeting her next morning before he continued on his route, and he assured her that he was delighted at having been the means of bringing her sad condition to her brother's notice.

The order from Knowlton & Co. was duly received with other business from Smithland at the office of Prescott, Mason & Co., and served to hoist the young hustler still higher in the estimation of the firm. He received a commendatory letter from Mr. Mason, and an assurance that the house fully appreciated his splendid efforts, and would see that he was suitably taken care of. Three weeks later Joe was in Riverton, from which place he was to work his way back to Chester. Darcey was also at Riverton, and at the same hotel. The rivals held no converse with each other, and as far as appearances went one would have supposed they were strangers to each other.

Joe's success rankled in Darcey's thoughts, and he set his brain at work trying to think up some plan that would give his rival a setback. Learning that Joe had driven over to Parkersville, a small town six miles from Riverton, to see a new firm that had started there, he hired a couple of disreputable fellows whose acquaintance he had made, and the three walked halfway to Parkersville, and lay in wait for the young drummer to return. Joe left on his return trip about half-past four. When halfway back his horse ran against an invisible obstruction—a stout wire stretched across the road—and stopped. Joe got out to see what was the trouble, and was immediately set upon and knocked senseless by Darcey's companions. The horse was tied to the fence and the boy was carried into the ruins of a house that stood a short distance back from the road. Here he was tied up and left in the cellar.

"When it gets dark we'll take him over to the railroad and ship him westward on a freight car," said Darcey.

The trio sat down to wait until the time came for them to act. In the course of half an hour Joe recovered his senses and found himself a prisoner in some dark place which he rightly concluded was the cellar of a house.

"I seem to be getting into all sorts of scrapes

on this trip," he said to himself. "This appears to have been a hold-up, and I have doubtless been robbed again. The rascals have tied me up and put me down here so they could make off in safety. If this is the old building near the road I noticed as I came along I am not likely to get free except through my own efforts. The chance of anybody dropping in here is not very good."

Feeling that his release from his unenviable predicament depended on himself, Joe set to work to free himself from his bonds. An hour passed and the sun was sinking beneath the distant horizon when Joe got one arm free. He put his hand in his pocket on the chance that his knife might still be there, and found it. It didn't take him long after that to free himself entirely. Then he found out that neither his watch nor his money has been disturbed. Then it occurred to him that this might have been a job put up by Darcey to delay his business arrangements in Riverton. As he had finished up his calls in that town, Darcey was not likely to make much by the trick if he was at the bottom of it.

"I suppose I'll have to walk to town, for it's likely whoever held me up has gone off in the rig," thought Duncan.

He lighted a match and looked to see where the exit from the cellar was. He found that he was under the stairway. The light of the match flashed upon something bright on the ground under the lower steps. He struck a second match and looked to see what it was. The object proved to be a stout japanned box. He reached under the step and drew it out. It was fairly weighty, as though quite full of something. As it was locked and the key was missing, the young traveler could not find out what the box contained. As the house was a vacant and deserted one he determined to take charge of the box and open it when he got back to his hotel. He waited ten minutes hunting in the rubbish on the possibility that the key might be there, but if it was he could not find it, and gave up the search. He walked up to the ground floor and found himself in the kitchen at the back of the house. The door was ajar and so he walked out that way instead of going through to the front of the house.

It was now dusk, and Joe judged he had lost a couple of hours by the hold-up. He walked along the side of the house, his feet making no noise on the soft earth. He was about to turn the corner when he heard voices not far away. He stopped and listened. He thought he recognized the tones of Darcey's voice. A moment later he was sure that rascally young man was there with a couple of companions. Duncan listened to the talk of the men and soon discovered Darcey's purpose to put him into a freight car and send him traveling westward until his presence was discovered and he was released.

"If I could only prove this trick on Darcey I'd make him sweat for it," said Joe; "but my word alone won't convict him, and he is bound to get off if I should have him arrested."

Joe waited where he was until the trio entered the house to take a look at their prisoner.

"Darcey will be surprised when he finds I am not there," chuckled Joe, as he hurried to the road.

There he found his rig tied to the fence. Two minutes later he was on his way back to Riverton. After eating his supper at a restaurant he took the japanned box to his room in the hotel. With the help of a chisel he had borrowed from the porter he snapped the lock and opened the box. Underneath a layer of newspaper he found packages of new bills, all bearing the name of the Riverton National Bank. Counting the money, he found that it amounted to \$30,000.

"This is considerable of a find," he thought. "I wonder who it belongs to?"

It struck him that the bank might have been robbed. He went downstairs and spoke to the night clerk.

"Say, has there been a robbery in this town lately?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," answered the clerk. "The Riverton National Bank was robbed of a bunch of money six or seven months ago, but the thieves were not caught and the money was never recovered."

"Any reward offered for the return of the money?"

"Five thousand dollars, afterward increased to \$10,000, was offered for the capture of the thieves and information leading to the recovery of the money. No one ever got it."

"Thanks," said Joe.

Instead of leaving town by an early train, as he intended, Duncan called on the president of the Riverton National Bank and secured an interview. He inquired if the bank had got back its stolen money.

"No," replied the president; "we never did."

Then Joe told him about the japanned box he found in the old house, and that it contained just the amount the bank lost.

"The money is made up of new bills, with the bank's name on it," he said.

"It must be the money we lost," said the president.

Joe unwrapped the box, which he had brought with him, and handed it to the president. The president identified the money by the numbers on the bills. He counted the money, found it correct and told Joe that he was entitled to the reward of \$10,000.

The money was paid to the boy and he took the next train along his route with a \$10,000 draft on the First National Bank of Chester in his pocket. On his way back to that town he did a good business, and when he finished his trip he was received in great shape by the firm. His salary was raised to nearly double, and his commissions amounted to a handsome sum. He returned to his home in Piqua for a short vacation, about \$11,000 better off than he left it.

When he went back to Chester he was sent out on short trips over different routes, and always proved that he was the boy with the "goods."

Next week's issue will contain "MATT, THE MONEY MAKER; or, A STRANGE FAD IN WALL STREET."

CURRENT NEWS

COLLAR EXPLODES

A bearded passenger on a Berlin street car was severely burned recently when a man nearby accidentally touched his celluloid collar with a lighted cigar. His beard, mustache, eyebrows and hair were burned off and his clothing set afire. Several other passengers suffered slight

AN INGENIOUS CISTERN

In Central Africa the gigantic baobab tree, whose trunk sometimes attains a diameter of forty feet, often serves as a natural cistern, retaining rainwater in large quantities in a cavity formed at the top of the broad trunk.

Taking the hint thus afforded by nature, the Arabs artificially hollow out the trunks of large baobabs and fill them with water during the prevalence of rains as a provision against the dry seasons.

These cisterns are in some cases twenty feet in height and eight or ten feet in diameter.

SPEED OF JACKRABBITS

Jackrabbits fleeing from pursuit attain a speed of fifty miles an hour for the first mile, Colorado Springs motorcycle club officials reported at the conclusion of a cross-country chase in which the

rabbit was run down at the end of five miles. In the second mile the rabbit made a forty-mile speed, and in the last three miles slowed down to thirty-five miles an hour. In their headlong dash over the prairie after the rabbit, the eleven motorcyclists in the party hurdled ditches and other obstructions at breakneck speed. There were no casualties, or accidents. When the rabbit fell exhausted he was picked up, and when he had rested was set free and scampered away.

"RATTLESNAKE FEAST"

A score of students and laboratory instructors at West Virginia University were treated to a rattlesnake feast one day recently while P. A. M. Reese, head of the Department of Zoology, incidentally attempted to prove that a great deal of meat goes to waste every year owing to common

The rattler from the West Virginia hills was presented to the university several weeks ago. When it declined to eat, Dr. Reese killed it and prepared it much in the same way that other meats are prepared.

Those who partook of the meat said it was not unlike the breast of a chicken and had the same appearance in color.

SOMETHING NEW COMING!

Watch for "Mystery Magazine No. 103, Out Feb. 15

We have just secured a series of intensely interesting articles from Russell Raymond Voorhees, an expert on psychology and metaphysics. They will begin in our next number and cover such subjects as

Astrology, Palmistry, Chiromy, Physiognomy, Phrenology, Numerology and other good features.

Written in simple language which all can understand, these articles clearly explain the meaning of each subject so you can see how psychologists cast horoscopes, read the lines of the palm, tell the nature of people by their faces, learn what one is best qualified for by the bumps on the skull, judge people by their handwriting, and work out characters.

Everybody who reads these articles will find them both instructive and amusing.

Remember!

They Commence in "Mystery Magazine" No. 103

OUT FEBRUARY 15

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 168 West 23d Street, New York City

Daring Dan Dobson

— OR —

THE BOY WHO BEAT THE MOONSHINERS

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

Zachary brought his own steed to the same safer position, for he did not care to be without a horse in such a country of the enemy.

"If we can get down the valley to Jefferson Cable's farm, Dan, we will be in a better position. That is about three miles further along. He is one of your father's tenants, an' he kin be depended on fer anything."

"Would he take a message?" asked Dan, suddenly.

"Are ye goin' to send for help?"

"Me? Not so you could notice! I am going to send for old Andy Adams, who is visiting in Hilldale. He offered my father a big sum of money for this land, and I am confident that we can wiggle out of our present trouble and pit this Barton against Adams. Then, with two good people bidding it would mean some fun. Adams is a millionaire himself, and he is always backed by a big crowd of St. Louis and Chicago lumber men. It would be the West against the East. Adams hasn't been down here in years, and I believe that we could get him pretty enthusiastic when he once saw the lay of the property. Don't you, Zach?"

The old guide nodded.

"There's more things than timber on this land, Dan," said he.

"What?"

The old fellow pointed along the hillsides.

"There's as much coal around us, within a radius of ten miles, as in some of the biggest mining districts in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. There's millions of dollars' worth here, when it is once developed."

Dan looked at Zachary with startled eyes.

"You don't mean it?"

"No one knows the perticklers but me and one other man," answered Zachary Shank, simply.

"Who is the other?"

"Jabe Newcastle. That is why he is stirrin' heaven and earth to git control. The first ye know he'll be offerin' ter buy it himself, ef he sees he can't steal it from ye."

Dan stuck out his honest hand to old Zachary.

"Old friend," said he, "if you will help me pull this through and get a market for this coal land I will give you a part of my share of the profits, and I have no doubt that my father would do the same. It is a wonderful chance, if what you say is true."

"It is true, lad. I have no reason ter be lyin'.

I don't want very much money for me an' my old woman. We're just mountain people, an' we wouldn't know how to spend a big fortune if we had it. We ain't got chick nor child—not a kin-folk in the world."

"Well, we will make a go of it now. Where is the coal, Zachary? Along the hills?"

"Yes, on the sides of the steep rocky slopes. The natives here have never realized it, for this would have been one of the biggest minin' sections in the world. Down there—see that dark ground, where a washout has carried the grass away, by the creek-bed?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is coal—that dark, slate-colored patch. It looks like rocks, but I know this ground. I know a good deal more about it than any one around here thinks, Dan. There is a cave about two miles to the east of this very hill. One that is big enough for fifty men ter hide in."

"Oh, ho!" said Dan. "I'll bet that is used by the moonshiners."

Zachary nodded.

"It's where they would go if there was a big raid," he said. "Some day they'll have ter go thar, too."

"Well, Zach, I have heard about lots of the moonshiners doing that work because their grandfathers did it before them. They believed that it was their right to make what they wanted without paying the government a tax on it, and that is often given as an excuse for them. But with this fine wooded country, the mineral deposits, and the fertile ground, which will be of use when the trees are cleared away, they ought to be as prosperous as anywhere in the country."

"There ain't much excuse for any locality bein' criminal, or poor ef the people is forced ter work and be honest."

"That is right," answered Dan. "Look down that long road, there are several riders coming. These men have us surrounded here, and now I suppose that they have reinforcements."

Dan started toward one side of the hill, and was met by a shot from the thicket.

Had he exposed more than the top of his hat he would doubtless have been wounded or killed, yet it was a narrow escape for a bullet-hole pierced the fabric not more than an inch from his skull.

But Dan swiftly brought his gun up, and sent a shot toward the spot where the puff of smoke floated.

There was a yelp of pain, which proved that his fire had been successful enough to teach the picket a lesson. Dan's quick sight through the bobbing foliage was better than the mountaineers expected.

The lad returned to the side of Zachary Shank, where they watched the approach of the riders.

"We'll just have to stay here and see developments," said Dan. "There's no telling what might be able to do, if we are clever about it. I have an idea that we can wiggle out of this little hilltop prison yet."

(To be continued.)

FROM ALL POINTS

BACTERIA THRIVE ON ICE

It has long been known that no degree of cold yet attained will kill bacteria. Yet it might be supposed that they must at least be dormant when embedded in eternal ice. Yet Dr. A. L. McLane found them alive and active in the ice many feet below the surface in the Antarctic expedition conducted by Sir Douglas Mawson in 1911-1914.

OIL ON INDIAN LANDS

Enter the Montana Indian oil magnate. The Crows, on their reservation already have begun to receive payment for their oil lands or wells, or both. Oil tracts on the reserve give great promise, it is said, and several Indian millionaires may soon be created. The Crows long since abandoned Indian habits and customs and to a large extent Indian speech. The only difference wealth will make will lie in luxury and display.

HUNTING FOR QUIPE

Professor W. W. Rowlee and George W. Mixter have sailed for South America for an exploration trip into Ecuador. Professor Rowlee, who is an authority on woods, goes in quest of quipe timber, great quantities of which he believes grow in Ecuador. Quipe is a very light, buoyant wood which is used extensively as a substitute for cork in the manufacture of life-preservers and similar articles.

SAW BUCKS BATTLE

Game Warden Theodore Wegmann had an interesting experience while making his rounds on the north border of Itasca Park, Minn., one day recently, witnessing a battle between two bucks and cheating a wolf of its prey.

Wegmann noticed a wolf skulking along the trail he was following, but before he could get a shot the wolf disappeared in the brush.

A crashing nearby attracted Wegmann's attention, and he found two bucks engaged in combat, with horns locked. After watching the struggle until satisfied the deer could not break apart of their own accord he went for assistance, and returned with Superintendent C. M. Roberta, who brought a rope, a hatchet and a saw.

TRAPPERS USE HIGH EXPLOSIVES

Taking advantage of the short open season on Alaskan beaver, protected by the Department of Agriculture for five years, unscrupulous white trappers are using dynamite, giant powder and other powerful explosives in small lakes and ponds to kill the fur bearers for the pelts.

On the shore of a small lake sixty-three beaver carcasses were found one day after a party of pot hunters had dynamited the dams and houses. In addition to those taken from the lake, probably hundreds were killed in the dams by the detonations. Indians and white trappers have declared

war on the fiends, and game wardens everywhere in Alaska are on the lookout for game law violators.

The trapping laws provide that beaver must be trapped in such a manner that once caught the animal is carried to the bottom of the stream or lake and drowned. Otherwise beaver will amputate their own legs to secure liberty.

The open season for bears was declared because of the hundreds of white men out of regular employment in Alaska. Indians faced starvation because of the failure of salmon to invade Alaskan waters last summer. Beaver skins bring trappers from \$15 to \$20, and it is estimated thousands of skins will be secured this winter up to March 1, when the season again closes.

The Alaskan beaver is large, dark brown, with an elegant coat of thick, fine haired fur. Some of them after being stretched for drying are four feet long. The average is three feet long and two feet wide. It is the most handsome and durable of fur-bearing animals, and is found only in North America. It is very intelligent, and displays great skill in its home building and providence of food. The strictest laws are necessary to protect it, because it is the most conspicuous of all wild creatures.

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Sang Loo, The Chinaman

By COL. RALPH FENTON

"Were you ever in a Chinese opium-den?" asked a friend of mine, a prominent Chicago detective, the other day.

"No, were you?" was my reply.

"Yes, and I came very near never getting out alive."

"Indeed! Tell me about it."

"Just in your line, eh?"

"Precisely, and it will be the more interesting to my readers as a story because it is the truth."

"Well, sit down here a moment in the District-Attorney's office. It's half an hour before I go before the Grand Jury on that sensational murder case of ours, and you shall have the story of my experience in a Chinese 'opium-joint,' as we call the opium smoking-den of the festive 'washee-washee.'"

I became seated, and the old detective heaved ahead.

"You may or may not remember that about two years ago the attention of the police and the public in general was called to the fact that an unusually large number of cases of 'unknown persons found drowned' were reported.

"The suspicions of the authorities were aroused, and our agency took the matter in hand.

"In a city like Chicago or New York, it is difficult to trace even a single man who mysteriously disappears, and while in more than one of the cases of 'found drowned' the victim was fully identified, in no one of these cases could it be positively decided whether there had been foul play or suicide at the bottom of the matter.

"As fate decided it in each case where identification was accomplished, there was no evidence of foul play upon the remains of the deceased.

"I reflected a good deal upon the case, and it occurred to me that if, as I suspected, the person found dead had met with foul play before they were cast into the water, they might have been drugged.

"I consulted a medical expert connected with one of the colleges here, and it was agreed upon between us that when the next body was found in the water without any evidence of violence on it, he would make a critical post-mortem examination, such as the authorities had not yet made, as it required great skill and considerable expense, involving chemical analysis and many experiments, an enumeration of which would be devoid of interest to the general reader, and therefore I will not weary you by stating them to you.

"Within a week after my consultation with the medical expert a body was found in the river. There was no external evidence of violence.

"The body was that of a middle-aged and well-dressed man. But there were no valuables on his person, and no evidence whereby he could be identified.

"A description of the unknown man was pub-

lished, and the body exposed, as usual, in the morgue for identification.

"Meanwhile my friend, the medical expert, began his investigation, without destroying the face of the deceased.

"Day by day he continued his work. An analysis of the stomach failed to reveal any trace of poison; but although he kept the secret from me until he had exhausted his skill and was sure he was right, the very first day of his examination he solved the mystery of the dead man's taking off.

"When all was done he called at my office.

"The unknown found drowned was killed by opium," he said.

"He then went on to give me a description of the appearance of an opium slave. So vivid was his picture of the appearance of the complexion of a victim of the terrible 'opium habit' that I felt sure I could recognize it if I met a case.

"That very day as I was on my way to dinner, I was accosted by a pale-faced young woman, whose appearance at once riveted my attention, for the opium case was in my mind.

"She was selling flowers, and as she presented her basket, and my eyes dwelt upon her face, I was certain that in her I beheld a victim of the deadly drug.

"I purchased a button-hole bouquet, and when she turned away I watched her. Indeed, I followed her in the stealthy way of a shadow, and she did not evade my secret espionage until I saw her enter a Chinese laundry on Clark street.

"I at once made up my mind that before the sun of another day arose I would see the inside of an opium den, and I had heard it whispered in police circles that the very Chinese laundry in which the flower-girl disappeared was suspected of being an 'opium joint.'

"When I reached my office I found a young lady waiting for me.

"At a glance I saw she was undoubtedly from the country, as there was a certain air of rustic simplicity about her that could scarcely be mistaken.

"My name is Jenny James, sir, and I am from Michigan. I came to this city in search of my father, who was a small country merchant, and who came to this city with a considerable sum of money, with which to purchase goods, in his possession. He overstayed his time and we became alarmed. Yesterday I read the description of an unknown man found drowned, in a Chicago daily paper, and the description was that of my poor father," said the girl.

"Upon my arrival here I proceeded to the morgue, and there my worst fears were fully realized. The man described in the newspapers really was my poor father. Oh, sir, he has been murdered and robbed, and mother and I are left alone and almost penniless! I have come to ask you to find my father's murderer, and recover his money. You are a great detective, and I beg of you to do this, and Heaven will reward you. I will gladly pay you if you find my father's murderer; but my father had all our money with him, and I can give you nothing now."

"Thus the poor girl concluded. She seemed to have perfect faith in my power to do all she

asked, and I was interested by her simple faith and deep distress.

"I will do all in my power, my girl, to find your father's money, and also his assassins. But we detectives are only mortals, and Heaven has not given the most skilful of us the power of rending the dark veils that hide all crimes," I said.

"I know you will succeed, and for myself and my widowed mother I thank you," replied the young girl, fervently.

"I sincerely hope so," was my answer, and then I said:

"Pardon the question, but was your father addicted to the use of opium?"

"The girl blushed, as she replied:

"He was. It was his one vice, and he could not live without the awful drug. He contracted the habit while suffering from malarial neuralgia. The opium was prescribed by a physician."

"I felt I held the clue to Mr. James' murder."

"That night, in disguise, I visited the den of Sang Loo—such was the name of the Chinaman who ostensibly ran a laundry in the South Clark street basement which I had seen the flower-girl enter. When I entered the place I found a hideous old Chinaman who was, as I soon found out, Sang Loo himself, and who may be justly called 'the Chinese opium fiend,' and two other Celestials present.

"There was no evidence of the 'fatal pipe' about, but when I displayed some money and said 'I wanted to "hit the pipe,"' as the Chinamen say, I was conducted to an interior room.

"There all the paraphernalia of the opium den was seen. The pipe, the lamp, the divan upon which the smoker reclines, and a jar of Chinese opium.

"I took my place upon a divan, and while one of the hideous Chinamen 'fed the pipe,' as he called keeping the opium in it on fire, the others jabbered together.

"Just before I entered the den I had taken an enormous dose of a preparation furnished by my medical friend, which he said would counteract the effect of the drug that I might smoke with impunity as much as was necessary in order to penetrate all the hidden mysteries of the 'joint.'

"I played my part well, and when I was pretty well gone, to all appearances, I saw the old fiend Sang Loo take a dark mass from a jar he had hidden under the divan and apply it to the pipe.

"I had no doubt this was the concentrated opium intended to kill, and as I thought, what if my medical friend's prescription were not strong enough to combat its influence, I almost betrayed myself by a shudder.

"But I seemed to smoke, although the stuff made my brain reel. Finally I feigned insensibility, and I felt myself dragged from the bunk into another apartment.

"Here all my valuables, and everything that could possibly assist in my identification, were removed from my person, and then I was left alone.

"I arose silently, and found myself in a small underground apartment. The door was secured, and there was no escape. I had a revolver cunningly concealed in one of my boots, and the opium

fiend had not discovered it, so that, if it came to the worst, I could fight for my life; but it was my purpose to play the game out, and find out if the victims of the fiend were consigned to the water, as we supposed.

"A moment later I heard a light footstep, and I sank back upon the floor. Directly the flower-girl entered, and closed the door.

"Another victim! Oh, if I only dared leave this accursed den! But I am the slave of opium, and then I am friendless, and the Chinamen would find me out, and murder me. As long as I decoy strangers who have acquired the terrible opium habit here, I am given food and clothing. My heaven, if I could but shake off the bondage of the awful drug! When I am myself, nothing could tempt me to lure men to this den of death, but when the drug is in my brain I am reckless. Would that I could save this poor man, but I cannot. They will carry him away, and throw him into the lake, where he will be drowned."

"Thus muttered the girl. A moment later she glided away.

"Not long after that Sang Loo crept into the room.

"In his hand he held a large knife.

"Did he mean to make sure of my death by plunging it into me? Had his suspicions been aroused that all was not right?

"These thoughts flashed through my brain.

"But the Chinaman passed by me, and prying up a board in the floor with his knife, he took money from a bag concealed there, and withdrew.

"Half an hour later he came in again, accompanied by two Chinamen. I was placed in a large basket, and a mass of rags thrown over me. Then I was carried into the street, the basket was deposited into a hand-cart, and Sang Loo and one of his companions trundled me away toward the lake.

"We had reached the waterside, and the Chinamen came to a halt. They were about to throw me into the water, when I suddenly leaped up, and with two quick blows from the butt of my pistol, I downed the opium fiends.

"To handcuff them was the work of a moment, and then I marched them to the station.

"That night we raided Sang Loo's den and captured the other Chinamen. A considerable sum of money, and a pocketbook containing the money Mr. James had in his possession when he left home, minus a few dollars, was found. Jennie James identified it and it was restored to her.

"As for the Chinamen, Sang Loo suicided in jail, and his two companions were sent to Sing Sing.

"The girl's evidence served to convict them, and she was allowed to turn State's evidence, but she was sent to the House of Correction, in the hope that she might be cured of the terrible habit that had wrecked her life.

"From the girl's statement it seemed that she was a friendless orphan whom Sang Loo had picked up in the city of Baltimore, and taught to love opium. Also from her evidence the court was convinced that at least a large percentage of the persons who had been found drowned were decoyed to their doom by the Chinamen.

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

KILLS LARGE HORNED OWL

Bert Walker, of Burnham, Pa., the other day shot and killed a great horned owl that measured forty-two inches from tip to tip, near Gib-money Park. He will have it mounted.

CHICKENS WORTH MORE THAN CORN

Anton Klimisch, Yankton County, S. D., a farmer, came to town with a wagon load of corn and two crates of chickens. The corn, of which there were about thirty bushels, brought him a little more than \$6. The chickens netted him \$32 on the local market.

AIRPLANE USED TO WIPE OUT PLAGUE OF INSECTS

At a meeting of the American Scientists it was announced that airplanes are now used to spread the poison of death on areas devastated by diseases or insects.

A six-acre catalpa grove at Troy, Ohio, which contained 4,815 trees, ranging in height from 20 to 30 feet, was being destroyed by the catalpa spinx, which was stripping the trees of their foliage. An airplane carrying the poison was only fifty-four seconds in spreading it, doing the work so effectively that ninety-nine per cent. of the caterpillars were destroyed.

CHAMP WEIGHT LIFTER CANNOT ENTER UNITED STATES

Marijan Matijevic, self-styled champion weight lifter of Czecho-Slovakia, is so strong that the juggling of a 2,000-pound anchor doesn't even give him an appetite for breakfast. But he wasn't strong enough to break through the cordon of immigration inspectors at Ellis Island the other day when he arrived from Havre on the French liner Lorraine.

He was informed that the quota from his country had already been admitted and that he would be sent home on "the next boat." On his way over he amused the passengers by taking light exercise with an anchor weighing a ton and using a 200-pound anchor chain as a skipping-rope.

DRIFTING SODA WATER BOTTLES

During the last year the Fishery Board of Scotland has been carrying out an interesting scheme of research to determine the currents of the North Sea.

The method employed was the setting adrift of ordinary soda water bottles, some to float and determine the surface currents, and others weighted so as to drift along the ocean bed and determine the bottom currents. These were fitted with wire tails to keep them off the bottom.

Each bottle contained directions to the finder, printed in five languages, to return it with particulars of the time and place of discovery. Eleven hundred surface and 1,300 undersea bottles were set adrift during the year, and of these 140 surface and 150 undersea bottles have been recovered.

It has been found that most of the surface bottles drifted northward, many of them being found on the coast of Norway.

LAUGHS

Madge—Do you think I should give up Charlie during Lent? Marjorie—Such a sacrifice isn't necessary in your case, my dear. Charlie is a lobster.

"My son, remember this: Marrying on a salary has been the salvation of many a young man." "I know, dad. But suppose my wife should lose her salary?"

Sunday School Teacher—Now, Willie, why don't you try to conquer yourself? Willie—Ain't no glory in conquerin' a feller what's been licked by every kid in town, is there?

"Why did you leave the swell boarding house?" "Because the swellness was at the expense of the food supply." "What do you mean?" "Four kinds of forks and two kinds of vegetables."

Mrs. Gramercy—When you look in your husband's pockets, do you ever find letters that he has forgotten to mail? Mrs. Park—No, but I sometimes find ones that he has forgotten to burn.

First Digger—We'll need another piece of pipe to finish this drain. Second Digger—Don't say anything about it till to-morrow morning, and then we kin sit around till it gets here.

"Here's an account of a fellow who took two years to make a toothpick." "Some overdrawn, eh?" "Oh, I don't know. I know of a mother who took five years to make a match."

"How well behaved your children are," said the minister's wife. "They are perfectly lovely children," added the minister. The parents smiled proudly, and up spoke little Agnes: "Pa said if we didn't behave he'd knock our blocks off; didn't you, pa?"

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

GIRLS IN LONG WALK

A 10,000-mile \$10 hike to draw a life sketch of President Harding.

Two Los Angeles girls, the Misses Mary Milsk and Geraldine "Gypsy" Somers, both of No. 100 South Olive street, started on the long walk to Washington the other day with but \$10 between them.

If, when they return one year hence with a likeness of President Harding in their portfolio and can show they have actually walked 10,000 miles, Al Christie, according to his promise, will give them leading rôles in motion pictures.

They must not ride public conveyances and they must "zig-zag" North and South to get in the extra mileage, Christie has stipulated.

Miss Milsk, who is a professional free-hand artist and a hiker of much experience on long distance trips, says the terms of the bargain are easy.

She will draw pictures of persons along the route of their journey and charge enough for this work to meet board and room bills.

The first lap of the journey will be along the Santa Fe trail as far as Kansas City. Then the "zig-zagging" is to commence. On the return trip they will walk in circles until they have negotiated the required 10,000 miles.

A TREASURE-FILLED LAKE

Ten thousand feet above the sea level, in the mountains of Columbia, not far from Bogota, lies the Sacred Lake of Guatavita, in a huge cup surrounded by hills. An English engineer, with the assistance of a body of natives, has in the last few years succeeded in draining off all the water, laying bare a deposit of mud about thirty feet in depth. It is in this mud that the valuable offerings of the ancient natives to their deity are presumably lying, and the beginning of the archeological work has already brought "finds" of a description sufficient to prove that the old tales of hidden treasure are not mythical. There have been recovered up to now a gold bowl, numbers of emeralds, two gold snakes, a gold band, golden images, curiously carved stones and several articles of pottery. According to the stories of the Indians, these are parts of the gifts which the inhabitants of Columbia were accustomed for centuries to make in propitiation of their gods.

The Chibcha Indians, under the leadership of their chief and high priest, assembled periodically on the shores of the sacred lake, the chief having his body covered with gold dust. There they placed their offerings of gold, precious stones and household treasure on a rude raft, which, when it was heaped up with the priceless cargo, was rowed to the center of the lake by the chief. He then washed off the gold dust from his body and the treasure on the raft was tossed into the water, while the spectators danced and sang on the shore.

After the Spaniards invaded the country the natives are said to have thrown countless treasures into the lake to prevent them from being seized by their conquerors. The latter made some attempt to recover the gold, but met with little success.

OLD MINE FIRE UNDER CONTROL

The Summit Hill fire, the king of all mine fires, is still burning, but it is well under control, according to a recent announcement by the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company on whose property flames have been eating up millions of tons of anthracite coal for the last 62 years. While this one has been brought under control another mine fire, which has been burning 19 years near Mount Carmel, Pa., in the heart of the lower anthracite fields, is still trying to spread. A third fire, which has been raging for three years, in the Red Ash vein of the Red Ash Coal made it necessary to close the old Giant's Despair road known to many automobilists because of the hill climbing contests that have been held upon it.

The Summit Hill fire in the Panther Creek Valley between Lansford and Coaldale, was discovered in February, 1869, in an abandoned gangway. The hard coal dips from 20 degrees to about 70 degrees and is about fifty feet thick. The area involved is about one mile long by 1,500 feet wide. How many millions of tons of coal have been consumed has never been accurately ascertained, but it has cost the company more than \$3,000,000 to fight the long burning fire.

In the early sixties an open cut was made in the involved area, which seemed to isolate the flames for many years, but eventually the fire travelled past this cut into the coal areas beyond. Many efforts were made to check the flames, but to no avail, until about 1910, when a concrete and clay barrier about twelve feet thick, 170 feet deep and 700 feet long, was built. The fire travelled so rapidly that it pressed closely upon the location of the new barrier before the work was completed and the heat became so intense that men could work only in twenty-minute relays. The barrier eventually checked the progress of the fire.

In order to insure against a further spread the coal company has been stripping the overburden from the coal west of the barrier. This operation has been in progress nine years, and when completed the company officials hope the fire will be certain to be under control. The cost of the stripping operation, involving the removal of 3,500,000 cubic yards of material, it is estimated, will approximate \$2,700,000. It is not known to the present generation of mining men how the fire started.

The nineteen-years-old fire is in the abandoned workings of the Sioux mine of the Lehigh Valley Company near Mount Carmel. It originated where hot ashes were dumped into a mine breach and ignited a vein of coal. Every effort to subdue the flames has proved unsuccessful.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

CAVEMAN ARRESTED

For eighteen years Joseph Shapski, forty years old, has been living like primitive man. A cave had been his home, and had not the fires he built endangered coal property he might have lived to the end of his time in seclusion.

When food and money became scarce Shapski obtained employment in the mines. When he got some money ahead he quit work.

Special policemen of the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal Company crawled through a small hole into the cave. There they found Shapski and dragged him out into the daylight. His hair was long, his beard untouched for years and his clothing scant.

In the cave was found \$50 in money. His abode was near a vein of coal. It was feared the fires he made would ignite the coal. He was sent to the County Poor Farm, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

HENS ON FARM PROVE PROFITABLE

Although South Dakota is classed as one of the gold producing States of the Union, owing to the fact that the famous Homestake Mine in the Black Hills is one of the great gold producers of the world—it will be a surprise to many to know that the hens of South Dakota each year produce many times the value of the Black Hills gold product.

The production of the Homestake Mine is estimated at \$6,000,000 per year. The hens on the farms of South Dakota, figures show, produce \$30,000,000 per year. For every dollar of South Dakota gold the South Dakota hens lay down \$5. The record made by the hens of the State is believed to have a record for States with no greater population than South Dakota, and in view of the fact that South Dakota has no great poultry farms.

There are now about 9,000,000 chickens in South Dakota. It is believed that with the experience of the last two or three months the number of hens in the State will be materially increased, as the farmers have found them a sure source of revenue.

HEARS HE IS DEAD

Mrs. H. E. Kuhl, Denver, Colo., has been notified by the Government's War Risk Insurance Bureau that she will receive the \$4,500 due her as a result of her husband's death in the service as soon as she makes application in the regular form.

As soon as Mrs. Kuhl got the notice she asked her husband what she ought to do about it.

"It seems you are dead," said Mrs. Kuhl.

"Odd," said Kuhl.

He felt himself speculatively.

"Mark Twain was right," he declared.

"Here I've been drawing my retirement pay regularly since I left the service in 1919. On the first of every month I pay my premium into the War Risk Insurance fund. Also I have been besieging the War Department to recognize my claim

for physical or total disability allotment. Now it seems that I am dead."

Kuhl said that when he had read the letter announcing his death, he returned it to the War Department with a notation to the effect that the account of his demise was slightly overdrawn.

98,050 RABBITS SLAIN IN DRIVES.

Farmers and business men alike are trying to free eastern Washington of rabbits. For several years they have been increasing at an alarming rate. Since January twenty-five rabbit drives have been held in Grant county, with a total of 98,050,000 killed. The record for the most killed is held by Wilson Creek, when on April 1 twenty-five persons shot 8,500. In other counties regular bimonthly drives are made over vacant lands and thousands are slain.

Records of destruction by rabbits show from one to eighty acres of wheat destroyed upon single ranches. Over 4,000 acres of grain were eaten up at Moses Lake by rabbits this summer. Rabbits have a preference for grain, not bothering alfalfa until they can no longer find wheat. At Wapato 800 acres of farms are fenced with rabbitproof netting.

There is a diversity of opinion why rabbits should increase so amazingly. The most reasonable explanation is that the fostering game laws reduced hunting, and this has tended to encourage the increase of wild life generally. Others hold that pioneer days have passed and the hunt for game is not nearly so fierce or determined as when men depended upon it for food.

The Department of Agriculture is assisting to destroy rabbits, and in six months distributed free 700 ounces of strychnine. A record kept by Charles Mitchell, of Wheeler, shows that one ounce of poison killed 1,329 in a single field. Many quail were also victims of the poisoned wheat.

There are millions of rabbits in the Northwest, spreading over big areas and in sections hitherto unknown. Brush patches, sage clumps, rock piles and burrows hold families of the pest of every age and size. It is claimed by authorities that rabbits breed every six weeks. Birds of prey frequent the wilder places to eat the rabbits. Coyotes have ceased to bother flocks because rabbits are so easily procured. Foxes and smaller animals often troublesome to farmers are no rabbit diet.

Naturalists believe rabbits ought to be protected to keep off the greater evil, but that was once attempted in Australia, and rabbits became so plentiful that their enemies refused to eat them. The rabbit scourge is viewed with alarm by orchardists, for in a single night a brood of them can destroy acres of fruit trees by gnawing.

With approaching autumn many drives, with hundreds of gunners participating, will be organized. There is a movement already started for shipping during the winter frozen rabbits to large cities for free distribution among needy families.

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